

*[English]***I&B Minister's Conference of SAARC**

1822. SHRI PRABHUNATH SINGH :
 SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO :
 SHRI T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the I&B Minister's Conference of SAARC countries was held at Dhaka recently;
- (b) if so, the main purpose of the Conference;
- (c) the details of subject discussed in the Conference and outcome thereof;
- (d) whether any action plan on media has been adopted in the Conference; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to implement the action Plan?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : (a) and (b) The first SAARC Information Minister's Meeting was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 25-26 April, 1998 to discuss measures for increasing co-operation in the field of Information and the Media among the SAARC countries.

(c) The meeting discussed subjects like need for greater contact amongst media personnel, co-operation among SAARC News agencies, improving the programmes under SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange, facilities for smooth movement of man and material related to media sector among SAARC countries, steps for better projection of SAARC outside the region, etc. A Dhaka Communique and Plan of Action was adopted at the end of the meeting.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The Plan of Action on media and information and action taken/initiated thereon is given as statement.

Statement

Plan of Action	Action Taken
1. Ensure free flow of information, newspapers, periodicals, books and other publications.	1. India has already been following a liberal policy with regard to free flow of information, newspapers, periodicals books and other publications.
2. Reduce postal and tele-communication rates for media transmission and information materials.	2. India already offers concessional rates for the Press/media both within India and for transmissions to SAARC countries. Concessional postal rates are also applicable within the region. The question of further concessions in telecom and postal tariffs within the region is to be examined by the SAARC technical committee on communication in consultation with member countries.
3. Increase cooperation amongst news agencies of SAARC countries.	3. News agencies in India which are independent of Government control, have been advised to take up the matter with their counterparts in other SAARC countries.
4. Facilitate easier travel for media persons within the region.	4. India already provides easy access to foreign journalists including those from SAARC countries.
5. Work towards the evolution of a SAARC recognised Regional Media Forum.	5. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.

Plan of Action	Action Taken
6. Hold an annual conference of editors and working journalists from SAARC countries.	6. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
7. Create a web page for exchange of news amongst news agencies of SAARC countries.	7. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
8. Enhance exchange of data through E-mail and internet.	8. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
9. Arrange regular exchange of TV and Radio Programmes.	9. Regular exchange of Radio and TV programmes do take place under SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange (SAVE).
10. Organise regular exchange and joint production of documentaries and films as well as holding of periodic SAARC film festivals.	10. India welcome joint production of documentaries and films and their exchange. However the final outcome would depend upon the reciprocal response from the other SAARC member countries. The 1st SAARC Film Festival is scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka later this year.
11. Arrange training for media persons of SAARC countries.	11&12. Instruction have already been issued to Indian Institute of Mass Communication. Indian Institute of Mass Communication already offers two 5 month "Advance Course in Development Journalism" for developing countries which give due consideration to SAARC countries.
12. Include SAARC orientation modules in the syllabi of national media training institutes.	
13. Improve the programmes under the SAARC Audio Visual Exchange Programme (SAVE) by making them more attractive and popular and increasing their frequency.	13. Improvement in the programme is a continuous process. Prasar Bharati has however, already been advised in the matter. Also a SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange (SAVE) Committee exists which meet once every year and suggests the measures for improvement in the quality and increase in the frequency of programmes.
14. Hold annual meetings of heads of national TV/ Radio organisations to review the SAVE Programmes.	14. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
15. Evolve model guidelines on transnational satellite broadcasting in the region.	15. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
16. Examine the financial and technical feasibility of establishing a SAARC satellite.	16. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
17. Explore the feasibility of setting up of a SAARC Information centre with media production, Research and Training units as well as SAARC Media Development Fund.	17. To be co-ordinated by SAARC Secretariat.
18. Discourage negative projection of member countries by media in SAARC countries.	18. India has already been following a policy of self-restraint in this regard.