Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a)   whether the Government propose to introduce a bus service between India and China on the pattern of India-Pakistan bus service;

(b)   if so, the details thereof; and

(c)   whether there is any proposal for the Prime Minister to undertake such a visit to China by bus;

(d)   if so, the details thereof; and

(e)   the time by which above bus service is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a)   No, Sir. There is no such proposal under consideration of the Government.

(b) to (e) Do not arise.

SAARC Conference

*306.   DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

SHRI A. C. JOS :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a)   whether India has volunteered to work as a co-ordinator and facilitator for free flow of Multilingual and Multimedia Information Technology (MMIT) and education among the countries of South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC);

(b)   if so, the details thereof;

(c)   whether this offer was made at SAARC Conference on MMIT which was held recently;

(d)   the details of suggestions/recommendations made at the conference; and

(e)   the steps taken by the Government on these recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) to (e) A SAARC Conference on Multilingual and Multimedia Information Technology was held from 1-4th September, 1998 at Pune, India. The Conference discussed various aspects of Information Technology relevant to the SAARC countries and made recommendations for cooperation in this field. These recommendations are set out in the Statement.

The recommendations of the Conference were placed before the SAARC Committee on Science & Technology which met in New Delhi from 24-26th February, 1999. No specific decision was taken by the Committee at this meeting on the recommendations. It is for SAARC countries to take a consensual view agreeing on a coordinator/facilitator for free flow of Information Technology.

Statement

Recommendations made by the Conference on 'Extending the use of Multilingual & Multimedia Information Technology held in Pune—1-4 Sept., 1998;

1.   In the event of activity of software business globally, the multilingual software development has so far been considered as non-glamorous and therefore has not received the attention it deserves to propagate Multilingual and Multimedia Information Technology (MMIT). The Member States may therefore endeavour to offer greater incentives to encourage the development of MMIT and to promote its large scale usage in the respective countries. The industry may also set up Special interest Groups to focus the attention in this area.

2.   The SAARC forum provides for cooperation in many fields among the SAARC nations. The Colombo Declaration issued at the Tenth SAARC Summit encourages exchange of Information Technology. The avenue should be used for greater cooperation among SAARC nations for development of MMIT, imparting education and training and for free flow of technology and products. As an enabling mechanism for this, focal points for Information Technology may be established in each country with special focus on MMIT. Suitable networking arrangement may be initiated in this regard.

3.   In order to encourage wide spread use of MMIT, Member States may encourage introduction of specific course module in this area in all Degree Colleges and other academic institutions. For this Distance Education made for delivering quality education may be provided.

4.   The following are the major areas for development where focus needs to be increased:

(i)   Human Machine Interface Systems including Speech Recognition/Synthesis Technologies and Optical Character Recognition.

(ii)   Machine aided translation.

(iii)   Research in Ancient Languages.

5.   There is a need to create information Contents using MMIT for effective documentation and dissemination of culture and heritage of the Region. For this mass media, Internet and CD-ROMs are an ideal choice, and thus could be used increasingly.

6.   In order to spread the usage of MMIT, the localisation of important applications should be urgently

carried out. For this, the services of the software industry from the Region should be utilised.

7.   In order to spread the information Technology education amongst the masses, including the schools, translation of the relevent course material should be carried out in the regional languages using MMIT.

8.   Apart from the developing products and technologies, customer focus needs to be brought in for serving the user interests.

9.   Standardisation of various scripts, unification of coding sets of similar languages, standardisation of terminology on computer in various languages, and Multimedia components, are an important prerequisite for faster spread of Multilingual Technologies and their cross migration among various applications and countries. A SAARC Task Force may be set up for proper co-ordination of this activity.

10.   To enable deeper penetration of MMIT, recourse should be made to the internet for putting results on development in this area and information on cooperation efforts in the public domain for the benefit of all concerned. This may also promote evolution of common networking languages.

11.   With the internet and needs developing in this area among SAARC countries, it was felt that such Conferences should be held every year by rotation among SAARC nations, which may also review progress on recommendations.

12.   An annual SAARC MMIT award may be instituted in the Region for recognising commendable performance in this area.

[Translation]

National Rehabilitation Policy

*307.   SHRI GAURI SHANKER CHATURBHUJ BISEN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)   whether the Union Government propose to formulate a National Rehabilitation Policy for the oustees of major and medium irrigation projects of the country;

(b)   if so, the details thereof; and

(c)   the time by which the policy is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) to (c) There is at present no National Resettlement Rehabilitation Policy. However, in the year 1980, the then Union Ministry of Irrigation had issued directives to all the States regarding rehabilitation of displaced persons due to major reservoir projects. Programmes for resettlement and rehabilitation of persons affected by reservoir projects are presently carried out by the State Governments/project authorities as an integral part of the project based on their own policies which vary from State to State and Project to Project. Steps have been initiated for adopting a National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation of persons affected by reservoir projects to get over the shortcomings in the implementation of resettlement and rehabilitation programmes. A draft policy document in this regard has been prepared by the National Water Board for consideration of the National Water Resources Council. However, the consideration/adoption of the said Policy by the National Water Resources Council depends on further modifications, if considered necessary, after the "National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisitaion of land" and "Amendment to the Land Acquisition Act, 1894" presently under consideration by the Government is finalised in consultation with the States and various voluntary organisations.

Fish Production

*308.   SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO :

DR. ASHOK PATEL :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)   whether the Government are aware that despite vast potential of fisheries in the country, those engaged in it are not getting the full benefit of it due to lack of technical know-how;

(b)   whether the Government have formulated any scheme to educate those engaged in fisheries about its technical aspects so that better production could be achieved; and

(c)   if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) to (c) Several steps have been taken by Government to disseminate technical details on fisheries and training to those working in the Fisheries Sector so that they can strive to achieve higher production. These steps, *inter-alia*, include training programmes for personnel engaged in fisheries, preparation of literature in simple language and its disssemination, establishment of demonstration-cum-training centres, dissemination of information through audio-visual media, etc.

Training of fishermen and fish farmers in modern aquaculture practices is one of the main components of the Schemes "Development of Freshwater Aquaculture" and "Integrated Coastal Aquaculture". The training activities under these schemes are made available to fish farmers through a network of 422 Fish Farmers' Development Agencies (FFDA) and 39 Brackishwater Fish Farmers' Development Agencies (BFDA).