

**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA):** (a) and (b) The question of transport between India and Bangladesh including bus service between Calcutta and Dhaka has been raised with the Government of Bangladesh. In this context, it has been decided to hold discussions on a Motor Vehicles Agreement between the two countries.

As far as direct rail link between the two countries is concerned, at present there are four interchange points/routes in operation between India and Bangladesh where only freight traffic is interchanged. There is no proposal for passenger train service between India and Bangladesh.

#### **HUDCO Office at Tripura**

50. **SHRI BAJU BAN RIYAN:** Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to open a regional office of HUDCO in Tripura;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (d) the time by which the office is likely to be opened?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU):** (a) to (c) HUDCO decides to open a regional Office depending on requirements of the State. Earlier HUDCO had considered a request from the Government of Tripura for opening a Regional Office in Agartala, HUDCO clarified to the State Government that the existing Regional Office of HUDCO at Guwahati is effectively catering to the requirements of Tripura. However, to develop a closer rapport with the implementing agencies of Tripura, HUDCO is exploring the possibility of establishing a Development Office at Agartala.

(d) The proposal is yet to be approved by the Board of Directors of HUDCO. HUDCO will be advised to consider the matter and take an early decision.

#### **Drinking Water Scheme in Gujarat**

51. **DR. A.K. PATEL:**

**SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA:**

Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether any drinking water scheme has been launched by the Union Government in Gujarat with the help of Netherland Government;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of funds sanctioned and received by the Government of Gujarat so far for the purpose?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (DR. U.**

**VENKATESWARLU):** (a) The Government of Gujarat has launched drinking water schemes in Gujarat with funds provided by the Netherlands Government.

(b) The details are as under:-

(i) Lathi-Liliya Regional Water Supply Scheme in district Amreli costing Rs. 728 lakhs with Dutch assistance of Dutch Guilder (DGL) 9,900 million (grant);

(ii) Sami-harij Regional Water Supply Scheme in district Mehsana costing Rs. 2481.20 lakhs with Dutch assistance of DGL 33.750 million (grant) and

(iii) Santalpur Regional Water Supply Scheme in district Banaskantha costing Rs. 1045.60 lakhs with Dutch assistance of DGL 14.210 million (grant).

(c) As per available information, the Government of Gujarat has incurred an expenditure of Rs. 36.93 crores upto September 1996. The Netherlands Government provides assistance to the Government of India at the rate of 85% of the expenditure incurred, i.e. Rs. 31.39 crores.

#### **Bilateral Issues with Neighbours**

52. **SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY:** Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government have taken fresh initiatives to resolve several outstanding bilateral issues with our neighbouring countries during the recent years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the agenda for action for 1997-98 in normalising and strengthening our relations with neighbouring countries?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA):** (a) to (c)

#### **Nepal and Bhutan:**

The Prime Minister of India paid an official goodwill visit to Nepal from 5-7 June, 1997. This was preceded by the Nepalese foreign Minister's visit to India in August, 1996 and their Prime Minister's visit in February, 1996.

2. The Trade Treaty between India and Nepal which was valid for five years was revised and renewed through exchange of letters on 3 December, 1996. India has agreed to provide access, free of customs duties and quantitative restrictions, to all articles manufactured in Nepal except three group of items, such as alcohol, tobacco and cosmetics. Nepal's request for an additional transit route to Bangladesh via Phulbari was accepted. It was also agreed that the modalities and working arrangements will be decided within two months. The new arrangements would be reviewed six months thereafter.

3. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed during Prime Minister's visit on civil aviation matters. It has been agreed to revise the existing capacity entitlement from 4000

to 6000 seats per week in each direction; to permit Nepalese airlines to operate on two additional points in India—Bangalore and Lucknow; to grant Fifth Freedom traffic rights beyond Kathmandu to two additional points to the Indian carrier and to permit multiple designations of airlines for both sides.

4. All steps are being taken to further strengthen and broaden bilateral ties with Nepal and Bhutan, two of India's closest neighbours and friends.

#### **Pakistan:**

The then Prime Minister, Shri H.D. Deve Gowda in his letter of felicitations on the assumption of office of the Nawaz Sharif Government in Pakistan proposed a comprehensive and wide-ranging dialogue between the two countries at an appropriate level on issues of mutual concern. This initiative resulted in the resumption of Foreign Secretary level talks in New Delhi from 28-31 March, 1997. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, during the visit to New Delhi for NAM Ministerial meeting, had discussion with the External Affairs Minister on 9th April, 1997. This was followed by a meeting between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan on 12th May, 1997 in Male during the SAARC Summit. All these contacts were positive and constructive. The Prime Ministers, after their meeting in Male, directed the Foreign Secretaries to continue their discussions to work out all aspects on the basis of which the bilateral dialogue between the two countries was to move ahead. The Foreign Secretaries met in Islamabad from 19-23 June, 1997. The discussions led to a Joint Statement which lists out the issues to be discussed between the two countries and provides a mechanism, including working group, for the same. The Statement provides the basis for a comprehensive, wide-ranging and sustained dialogue between the two countries. We look upon it as a first step in our efforts to engage Pakistan on a wide front with the objective of establishing a relationship of trust, friendship and cooperation.

2. The next round of Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan will be held in September, 1997.

#### **Bangladesh:**

The Government has signed with the Government of Bangladesh the "Treaty on sharing of the Ganga waters at Farakka" in December, 1996.

2. A visit by the Minister for Water Resources and the convening of the 32nd Meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission has been scheduled. It would review the working of the treaty on Ganga waters and also discuss other issues of mutual interest in regard to water resources. Efforts would continue towards institutionalising the dialogue on security related issues. We would continue our facilitation role in the repatriation of Chakma refugees from Tripura. We will continue to work towards improving trade and transportation links with Bangladesh. People to people interactions would be enhanced.

#### **Sri Lanka:**

The dialogue with the Shri Lankan Government on the problems faced by fishermen straying into each others territorial waters would be continued. The announcement made by our Prime Minister in his capacity as the External Affairs Minister in January, 1997 to remove quantitative restrictions and reduce tariffs on a substantial number of items of export interest to Sri Lanka would be implemented in coordination with our Ministry of Commerce. Interaction between the private sectors of the two countries would be permitted with a view to encourage two way flow of investments. Further cultural exchanges would also be encouraged.

#### **Maldives:**

Our efforts would continue at consolidating existing cordial bilateral ties. Maldives would be provided with assistance in its efforts to develop its human resources. In this connection it is proposed to start up distance education in Maldives with the assistance of Indira Gandhi National Open University.

#### **Myanmar:**

Relations with the Government of Myanmar would be developed in order to achieve India's national priorities in terms of improved border management, security, border trade and control of smuggling of narcotics, arms and other illegal commodities. The construction of the Tamu-Kalemoy Road would be taken up.

#### **China:**

In recent years India-China relations have acquired maturity and substance. While continuing to address outstanding issues including the boundary question, we have sought to expand mutually beneficial cooperation in all areas. We have agreed to work towards a constructive and cooperative relationship. India and China have agreed to impart a much greater economic and technological content to the relationship. It has been agreed to convene the next meeting of the Joint Economic Group to work for a significant expansion of economic cooperation and trade between the two countries. The India-China sub-group on Science and Technology will meet to look at opportunities for enhancing functional cooperation between the two sides. The two countries are also strengthening social and cultural ties.

#### **District Cancer Control Programme**

53. SHRI SHIVAJI VITHALRAO KAMBLE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Maharashtra has requested the Union Government to provide assistance for the prevention and early detection of cancer under the project "District Cancer Control Programme" to Tata Memorial Cancer Research Centre and Nargis Dutt Memorial Cancer Hospital, Barshi both managed by Ashwini Rural Cancer Research and Relief Society, Barshi;