

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4864
ANSWERED ON:19.12.2002
COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES LAW MINISTERS CONFERENCE
GADDE RAMAMOCHAN;M.V.V.S MURTHI

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the conference of Law Ministers of Commonwealth Countries held recently;
- (b) if so, the details with the issue raised by the participants;
- (c) the details of issue raised by Indian representatives; and
- (d) the outcome thereof with the final decision taken, if any?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COAL, MINES, LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) Yes, Sir. The Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting was held at Kingstown, St.Vincent & Grenadines between 18-21 November, 2002. The Indian delegation to the said meeting was led by Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of State for Coal, Mines, Law & Justice.

(b) A Large number of issues, such as human rights, good governance, modernization of law of evidence, law & development, freedom of information, privacy, protection of personal information, competition law, laws relating to e-commerce & e-evidence, terrorism, extradition of offenders and mutual cooperation in criminal matters, etc. was discussed. India deeply focussed upon the menace of terrorism and emphasized upon the Commonwealth Countries to have a concerted legal action in its containment.

(c) In most of the matters discussed, India is either already having legislation in place or is in the process of making one. The Indian position on these issues was explained. India also took the stand that terrorism was a threat to humanity against which the entire civilized world should stand united; that no nation should take the plea of political exception in sheltering terrorists; that the proceeds of terrorism should be confiscated to ensure compensation to the victims of terror.

(d) A Communique was issued at the end of the Meeting, the salient features of which are:

- i) Law Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of citizens.
- ii) Law Ministers affirmed their commitment to the promotion of the fundamental Commonwealth values of freedom of assembly, association and expression.
- iii) Law Ministers mandated senior officials to finalise their work on a Commonwealth Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and present a draft to Ministers for consideration in the next meeting.
- iv) Law Ministers condemned terrorism in all its forms and reaffirmed their commitment to work together and assist each other in combating terrorism and to protect and ensure security of our people. Law Ministers resolved to ensure that no Commonwealth country be used as a safe haven for terrorists and that no terrorist is able to evade extradition by invoking the political offence exception.
- v) The Law Ministers amended the London Scheme for Extradition.
- vi) Law Ministers also agreed to make immediate amendment in Harare Scheme on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.
- vii) Law Ministers considered a number of Modal Bills for use by Member countries. These include subjects like computer and computer-related crimes, law of evidence, freedom of information, privacy, protection of personal information, competition law, land and development, etc. While some of them were approved, the Commonwealth Secretariat was requested to do some more work on some others.