

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3099
ANSWERED ON:13.08.2003
INDO-BANGLADESH ECONOMIC TIES
IQBAL AHMED SARADGI;SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL;V. VETRISILVAN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission held talks recently;
- (b) if so, the details of the issues discussed and the outcome thereof;
- (c) whether the Union Government have decided to start the Dhaka-Agartala bus service to boost economic ties;
- (d) if so, the facts of the matter thereof; and
- (e) the details of the various steps proposed to be taken by the Government to strengthen the economic ties between the two countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA)

- (a) The sixth Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting between India and Bangladesh was held in Dhaka from 14-16th July.
- (b) All issues of economic and commercial interest were discussed in a comprehensive manner. It was decided that henceforth the JEC would meet annually. It was also agreed that the Standing Committee of officials would meet once when the JEC convenes and once in between the sessions of the JEC to effectively monitor developments. It was agreed that a Joint Working Group at the level of Joint Secretary of the Ministries of Commerce would meet in Dhaka by the middle of October 2003 to begin negotiations on a bilateral Free Trade Agreement. A decision was taken to inaugurate the Dhaka Agartala bus service in the first week of August, 2003. Discussions were held on a possible new line of credit to Bangladesh, which could be denominated in US dollars. A number of proposals in the Railway sector were discussed including those on introduction of containerised services by rail and the Sealdah-Jotdevpur passenger rail link. Cooperation in new areas such as Science and Technology, Information Technology and Agriculture was also discussed.
- (c) Yes.
- (d) The date for the inaugural Dhaka-Agartala bus service is being worked out between the two sides.
- (e) Other measures being taken to improve economic ties between the two countries include meetings of the Joint Working Groups on para-tariff and non-tariff barriers and on customs, an agreement on bilateral investment protection and promotion and a revised bilateral trade agreement.