

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:317
ANSWERED ON:23.11.2011
SAARC SUMMIT
Botcha Lakshmi Smt. Jhansi

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the 17th SAARC Summit was held in Maldives;
- (b) if so, the details of the resolutions passed at the summit;
- (c) whether South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) is yet to be implemented fully; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the time by which the differences would be ironed out and SAFTA is implemented fully?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SMT. PRENEET KAUR)

- (a) The 17th SAARC Summit was held in Addu City, Maldives on 10-11 November 2011.
- (b) The Heads of State/Heads of Government of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka issued the Addu Declaration on November 11, entitled "Building Bridges". The text of this Declaration is attached.
- (c) & (d) The South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Agreement was signed on 6 January 2004 during Twelfth SAARC Summit held in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Agreement entered into force on 1 January 2006, and the Trade Liberalization Programme commenced from 1 July 2006.

SAARC Member countries are moving ahead to implement their respective commitments under the SAFTA in a time-bound manner, in accordance with a specified implementation schedule for planned tariff liberalisation programme, as given below:

Phased reduction By Non-LDCs By LDCs By Sri Lanka
tariff to

20% By 31.12.2007 - -
30% - By 31.12.2007 -
0-5% for NLDCs By 31.12.2012 By 31.12.2015 By 31.12.2013
0-5% for LDCs By 31.12.2008 do By 31.12.2008

Hence, non-LDCs, which are India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, are required to reduce their tariff to 5% by 2013, and the regional LDCs have to do so by 2016. India is working to implement these requirements within the agreed timeframe.

ADDU DECLARATION 11 November 2011

"BUILDING BRIDGES"

The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai; the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonchhen Jigmi Yoeser Thinley; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Nasheed; the Prime Minister of Nepal, His Excellency Dr. Baburam Bhattarai; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani; and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa met in Addu City, the Maldives, on 10-11 November 2011 for the Seventeenth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Welcoming the theme of the Summit and recognizing the importance of bridging differences, creating better understanding and promoting amity and mutually beneficial and comprehensive cooperation in order to promote effective linkages and connectivity for greater movement of people, enhanced investment and trade in the region;

Reaffirming their commitment to peace, confidence building, liberty, human dignity, democracy, mutual respect, good governance and human rights;

Renewing their firm commitment to alleviate poverty and reduce income inequalities within the societies and reaffirming their resolve to improve the quality of life and well-being of their people through people-centered sustainable development;

Recognizing that the full enjoyment of fundamental rights by women and girls is an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and that gender-based violence and discriminatory practices constitute a violation of fundamental rights;

Mindful of the plurality of cultures and diversities within the region and cognizant of the need to promote inter-cultural harmony through greater contact and interaction between peoples;

Deeply Concerned about the continuing threat of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, transnational organized crimes, especially illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, trafficking in persons and small arms and increased incidents of maritime piracy in the region; and reiterating their resolve to fight all such menaces;

Conscious of the environmental degradation and particular vulnerabilities of the region to the threat of climate change;

Recognizing the need to further strengthen the institutional mechanisms of SAARC in order to bolster and enhance regional cooperation;

Welcoming the signing of the SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters, the SAARC Seed Bank Agreement, the SAARC Agreement on Multilateral Arrangement on Recognition of Conformity Assessment and the SAARC Agreement on Implementation of Regional Standards;

Recognizing the importance of the full implementation of SAFTA as a measure towards the creation of an enabling economic environment in the region;

Noting the recommendations of the Report of the First Meeting of the South Asia Forum that SAARC needs to move from looking within to accepting the logic of interdependence;

Acknowledging the participation of Observers from Australia, the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, the Union of Myanmar, the United States of America and the European Union at the Seventeenth Summit;

DO HEREBY DECLARE:

1. To direct the SAFTA Ministerial Council to intensify efforts to fully and effectively implement SAFTA and the work on reduction in Sensitive Lists as well as early resolution of non-tariff barriers and expediting the process of harmonizing standards and customs procedures.
2. To direct the SAARC Finance Ministers to chart a proposal that would allow for greater flow of financial capital and intra-regional long-term investment.
3. To hold the Twelfth SAARC Trade Fair along with SAARC Travel and Tourism Fair in Kulhudhuffushi, Maldives in 2012; and to develop modalities, by involving the relevant private sector, in promoting the region globally as "Destination South Asia."
4. To conclude the Regional Railways Agreement and to convene the Expert Group Meeting on the Motor Vehicles Agreement before the next Session of the Council of Ministers; and to direct the early conducting of a demonstration run of a container train (Bangladesh – India – Nepal).
5. To direct the Secretary General to ensure completion of the preparatory work on the Indian Ocean Cargo and Passenger Ferry Service, including the Feasibility Study, by the end of 2011, in order to launch the Service.
6. To ensure timely implementation of the Thimphu Statement on Climate Change.
7. To direct the conclusion of the Inter-governmental Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation and the Study on the Regional Power Exchange Concept as also the work related to SAARC Market for Electricity.
8. To make available an appropriate percentage of national income towards the respective countries renewable energy investments, subject to the approval of national arrangements.
9. To resolve the operational issues related to the SAARC Food Bank by the next Session of the Council of Ministers with a view to ensuring its effective functioning.
10. To root out terrorism, taking into account its linkages with illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and small arms and to make coordinated and concerted efforts to combat terrorism; and call for an early conclusion of the proposed UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and completion of the ratification of the SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.
11. To initiate work towards combating maritime piracy in the region.
12. To direct the convening of an Inter-governmental Expert Group Meeting to discuss the establishment of a regional mechanism to

ensure empowerment of women and gender equality in the region, with focus on national legislations, including timely realization of the MDGs and SDGs.

13. To direct the finalization of the work on the elaboration of the SAARC Regional Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution with a view to its adoption by the next Summit.

14. To formulate an actionable framework to address the common challenge of sanitation and access to safe drinking water in the region.

15. To expedite the work on mutual recognition of academic and professional degrees and harmonization of academic standards; and establishment of long-term linkages among universities, research institutions and think-tanks in the region.

16. To direct the South Asia Forum to continue to work towards the development of the "Vision Statement" for South Asia and its future development, including on the goal and elements of a South Asian Economic Union, as may emerge from its subsequent meetings.

17. To strengthen SAARC mechanisms, including the Secretariat and Regional Centres, through an inter-governmental process.

18. To direct SAARC mechanisms and institutions to develop and implement regional and sub-regional projects, as appropriate, in agreed areas.

19. To undertake a comprehensive review of all matters relating to SAARC's engagement with Observers, including the question of dialogue partnership, before the next Session of the Council of Ministers in 2012.

20. To mark a SAARC Media Day and, in that context, decide to convene a Regional Conference on Media to consider deepening collaboration in the region.

ISSUED on 11.11.11, in Addu, Maldives.