

*[Translation]***Labour Welfare Schemes**

204. SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any scheme for the welfare of the labourers of Uttar Pradesh particularly of Noida and Greater Noida during the last three years till date;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the amount spent on these schemes so far, year-wise; and

(c) the number of labourers of Noida and Greater Noida benefited from these welfare schemes during the last three years year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) The information is being collected from State Government of Uttar Pradesh and will be laid on the Table of the House.

*[English]***Three Nation Summit**

205. SHRI T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Bangladesh has decided to have a three nations summit in Dhaka in November 1997;

(b) if so, whether India has also been invited to this summit;

(c) if so, the main purpose and agenda of the summit; and

(d) whether India has decided to participate in the summit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) to (d) In pursuance of a discussion held in Male in May 1997 during the 9th SAARC Summit the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had addressed a letter to PM which contained a proposal for a "Businessmen's Round Table Meeting" during the month of November, 1997. It was proposed that the round-table be jointly inaugurated by the Prime Ministers of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. There was no reference to a joint summit meeting of the three Prime Ministers as reported in the media. In his reply, Prime Minister has described the proposal for a businessmen's round-table as a useful one directed at our mutual goal of increased economic and commercial cooperation, and also suggested that the apex bodies of business groups in our countries could take this up. A decision on the participation by the Prime Minister in the inauguration of the event would be taken at the appropriate time.

SAARC Conference at Male

206. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recent SAARC Conference held in Male has helped to improve the regional cooperation among the member nations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the other main recommendations made at the conference; and

(d) the steps taken to implement these recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) At the Ninth SAARC Summit at Male the Heads of State or Government of SAARC member states resolved to accelerate regional cooperation and the main decisions taken included the following:-

(i) setting up of a Group of Eminent Persons in order to develop a long range Vision for SAARC and to formulate a perspective plan of action including a SAARC Agenda for 2000 and Beyond;

(ii) advancing the target date for the achievement of a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) to the year 2001 A.D. and providing guidelines for the Third Round of Trade Negotiations under the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA);

(iii) revolving that specific subregional cooperation projects involving three or more member states of SAARC will be encouraged within the SAARC framework;

(iv) designation of 1997 as the "SAARC Year of Participatory Governance";

(v) designating 2000-2010 as the "SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child";

(vi) inclusion of new categories of persons in the SAARC Visa Exemptions Scheme to further promote people-to-people contact; and

(vii) agreement that informal political consultations, not formally a part of the SAARC process, could be useful.

(d) The first meeting of the Group of Eminent Persons is to be held soon in Maldives. An Inter Governmental Expert Group on Transition to SAFTA held its first meeting in Thimpu in May, 1997 and its second meeting will be held in September 97. The first meeting of the Third Round of Trade Negotiations under SAPTA is to be held in Kathmandu from 29 to 31 July, 1997. As for subregional cooperation projects, the modalities for cooperation have to be finalised. Necessary action is also being taken to have suitable activities for the observance of the "SAARC Year of Participatory Governance".