

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1593

ANSWERED ON:11.12.2003

SAARC INFORMATION MINISTERS CONFERENCE

CHANDRA NATH SINGH;GADDE RAMAMOCHAN;M.V.V.S MURTHI;MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT;NIVEDITA  
MANE;SADASHIVRAO DADOBA MANDLIK;V. VETRISSELVAN

**Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the SAARC Information Ministers` Conference was held recently,
- (b) if so, the issues discussed and the final decisions taken therein;
- (c) whether a Pakistani Minister made some remarks against our Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the said Conference; and
- (d) if so, the reaction of the Government in this regard?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) During the meeting India offered to hold the second Conference of Editors and workingjournalists in 2004. India also offered 12 seats to SAARC countries in training institutions.Member countries were asked to expedite their comments on model guidelines on transnational satellite broadcasting. The meeting also supported the freer movement of media personnel within the region. It was agreed to host the SAARC Information Centre in Nepal and to hold the 4thmeeting of the SAARC Information Ministers in Bhutan. India also suggested for institution of SAARC Film Festival on a regular basis.

(c) & (d) It is unfortunate that Pakistan`s Minister of Information Mr. Sheikh Rashid Ahmed during his visit to India for the Third SAARC Information Ministers Conference made negative comments about bilateral relations, India and some distinguished Indian leaders.

The Minister of State (IC) for Information and Broadcasting, in his statement on November 142003 stated, inter alia, that the comments made by the Pakistani Minister were in bad taste and were not in keeping with the spirit of SAARC. He added that the process of normalization of relations between India and Pakistan, initiated by the Prime Minister, would continue since it had the support of the people in both the countries.