

- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) Raksha Mantri received an invitation in early May, 1998 from the US Secretary of Defence to visit the United States of America at a mutually convenient time. To dates for the visit have been finalised.

Inquiry into Delhi of a Man during Firework Show of Army

3343. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether an investigation has been ordered by the Government into the death of a young man who was hit on his head by a projectile from a firework show at Calcutta Rowing club lawn on April 18, 1998; and

(b) if so, the outcome of the investigation and the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) Army and Civil authorities are conducting Joint Investigation into the incident of death of a young man at Calcutta Rowing Club lawns possibly due to a firework show on 19th April, 1998. The inquiry is in the final stage and is likely to be completed shortly.

Encroachments on Defence Land

3344. SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the ecological imbalances created due to large scale felling of trees, encroachments in various parks and open lands, mushroom growth of multi-storied buildings by civilians within areas under the control of defence;

(b) if so, whether the Union Government have issued any directives to the Directorate General of Defence Estates to tackle the problem sternly;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the efforts being made to ensure that periodical monitoring is done for protecting the damaged environment in the Cantonment areas ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) to (d) Whenever unauthorised felling of trees, encroachments and unauthorised construction are undertaken within any defence land, prompt action is taken by the concerned authorities. The Ministry has, in addition, issued instructions to various agencies to tackle the problem of encroachments as well as unauthorised construction.

National Capital Region Board

3345. SHRI NARESH PUGLIA : Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting of National Capital Region Board was held recently at New Delhi; and

(b) if so, the points discussed in the meeting ?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI) : (a) Yes, Sir. The 23rd meeting of the National Capital Region Board was held on 13.6.98 in New Delhi.

(b) Various points relating to the development of the core infrastructure components such as extending efficient telecommunication network, improving highway network, setting up power plants and transmission and distribution of power, development of road rail network etc., which are crucial for the accelerated development of the National Capital Region were discussed in the meeting. The meeting also considered the question of structuring the NCR as a common Economic Zone with the objective of evolving uniform tax and tariff structure for commodities and services throughout the region without any differences among the Member States to facilitate the envisaged balanced growth of the Region.

Indo-US Joint Tactical Exercise

3346. SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state

(a) whether India and the United States of America (USA) had decided to hold joint tactical military exercise;

(b) if so, whether any final discussion in this regard has been reached;

(c) if so, the details thereof ;

(d) whether in view of the US sanctions this programme has since been postponed; and

(e) if so, the reaction of the Indian Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) to (c) Government of India had approved in May, 1998 the conduct of Joint military exercise with the US Army in three phases. The first phase of the exercise was to be held in Hawaii in July/August, 1998. The second and third phase of the exercise were to be held in India in October/November, 1998.

(d) and (e) Consequent upon the underground nuclear explosions undertaken by India on May 11 and 13, 1998 the spokesman of the US Department of Defence announced the cessation of all military exchanges with India. In the light of this announcement, no armed forces or defence-related exchanges with the USA are anticipated in the foreseeable future.