

29 of the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1579/80].

(8) A copy each of the following Notifications (Hindi and English versions) under sub-section (3) of section 29 of the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976:—

(i) The Sultanpur Kshetriya Gramin Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977, published in Notification No. S.O. 3973 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977.

(ii) The Uttar Banga Kshetriya Gramin Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977, published in Notification No. S.O. 3974 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977.

(iii) The Pandyan Grama Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977 published in Notification No. S.O. 3975 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977.

(iv) The Vaishali Kshetriya Gramin Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977, published in Notification No. 3976 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977.

(v) The Monghyr Kshetriya Gramin Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977 published in Notification No. S.O. 3977 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977.

(vi) The Bundelkhand Kshetriya Gramin Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977, published in Notification No. S.O. 3978 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977.

(vii) The Santhal Parganas Gramin Bank (Meetings of Boards) Rules, 1977, published in Notification No. S.O. 3979 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1978.

(viii) The Hardoi-Unnao Gramin Bank (Meetings of Board) Rules, 1977, published in Notification No. S.O. 3980 in Gazette of India dated the 24th December, 1977. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1578/78].

12.03 hrs.

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER
RE. HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE
COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GO-
VERNMENT REGIONAL MEETING
HELD AT SYDNEY

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): On the 17th of February I returned from the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government of Asian and Pacific Region, which was held in Sydney for the first time. The initiative for this Conference was taken by Prime Minister Fraser of Australia at the Commonwealth Conference held in London last June. Even at that time, I had welcomed the proposal since I believed that a smaller regional meeting could be more useful and effective in initiating and pursuing plans for cooperation in a number of fields, mainly economic. We were glad to note that the Sydney meeting was attended by the Heads of Government of all the 12 countries in the region. I was accompanied by a delegation which included the Minister for External Affairs.

From India's point of view, the Conference served an important purpose in bringing together the leaders of the Commonwealth countries in the Asian and the Pacific region, some of them from small countries like Nauru, West Samoa and Tonga, with which we have not had close contacts. I also had a valuable opportunity to renew my acquaintance with President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh, President Jayawardenne of Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Prime

Minister Hussain Onn of Malaysia, Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamsese Mara of Fiji, Prime Minister Muldoon of New Zealand and also Prime Minister Fraser who, as host, was in the Chair.

Though the meeting was sought to be disrupted by a deplorable act of terrorism at the venue of the Conference, by unanimous agreement the Conference went on as scheduled. The Australian Government spared no pains to protect the delegations from the hazards of sabotage. Their arrangements and hospitality won admiration from all participants. I would also like to record my thanks to our Australian hosts through this statement.

During the regular and informal discussions, we covered a great number of topics which are reflected in the Joint Communique, which is consistent with our basic views and aspirations. These included international relations in South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, questions like terrorism, disarmament, the Indian ocean, Southern Africa and the Middle East. The main emphasis was on international economic issues the danger of protectionism and the need for freer trade, Commodities and the Common Fund, measures to promote industrial development, debt burdens; plans and prospects for regional economic and functional co-operation on energy, human resources, food production and rural development, curbing drug trafficking, and the special problems of small island States.

It was decided to set up two consultative groups on trade and energy respectively and two working groups on terrorism and illicit drugs respectively. The reference paper presented by India on alternative sources of energy and my initiating the discussions aroused earnest interest, as a result of which India was asked to coordinate the group on energy. The

meeting also decided that special Commonwealth programmes to assist small States should be presented for further consideration.

As announced in the press, one of the important decisions concerning India is that we have agreed to host the next regional meeting at Delhi in 1980. This request came at the suggestion of several member countries. It was gratifying to note the esteem which India is regarded by the countries in the region and the possibilities for strengthening our co-operation with them in many fields. The diversity of India and the range of its developmental experience are beginning to be noted as relevant patterns of growth for several developing countries. This meeting enabled me to assure my colleagues from these countries that India would be happy to share whatever knowledge and experience we have gathered in the difficult process of economic diversification and development.

To sum up, the Sydney meeting was a worthwhile innovation because it was both regional and functional. This forum does not subsume or substitute other agencies for regional cooperation such as ESCAP and ASEAN. The very flexibility and informality of the group may be expected to provide a suitable framework for furthering our bilateral and multi-lateral contacts in the Asian and Pacific region. We shall associate ourselves actively in the follow-up measures which are planned by the working groups in order to make the Delhi meeting in 1980 a worthy successor to the Sydney meeting.

SHRI A.E.T. BARROW (Nominated-Anglo-Indians): You used the term Middle East. Did you mean West Asia?

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: I meant both.