

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS**Military Ties, with Australia**

*422. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India and Australia recently resumed military ties, which were jerked off the rails after the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests when both countries withdrew their military attaches and other military contacts came to a grinding halt;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) by when the agreements between the two countries would be signed resuming supply of defence equipments to India?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) During his visit to India in March 2000, the Australian Foreign Minister had discussions with our External Affairs Minister, during which it was felt that the bilateral relations should not be held hostage by the single issue of nonproliferation and accordingly it was agreed 'in principle' to resume defence relations. The modalities of the resumption of defence ties would be worked out through diplomatic channels.

Setting up Power Plants in Assam

*443. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a scheme to set up power plants in the state of Assam during the next two years; and

(b) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) and (b) At present three sanctioned hydro electric projects are under execution in the state of Assam as detailed below:—