

[3 March, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
32.	Daman & Diu	Employment in automobile repairing workshops and garages	60.00
33.	Delhi	Single Rate	110.10
34.	Lakshadweep	-do-	52.00
35.	Pondicherry	Agriculture	100.00

Note:- Minimum Wages Act has been extended *w.e.f.* 1.10.2004 in Sikkim.

Postponement of SAARC Summit

*54. DR. NARAYAN SINGH MANAKLAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons behind postponement of recent SAARC Summit in Bangladesh;

(b) whether India's position in the postponement of Summit was at variance with other Member countries, including the host country;

(c) if so, what has been India's reaction to the position of other member countries;

(d) whether Government have any strategy to utilize SAARC forum to strengthen democracy and bring about regional peace and prosperity; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) India formally communicated to the Government of Bangladesh that it would not be able to attend the SAARC Summit in Dhaka on the scheduled dates of 6-7 February, 2005. This decision was taken against the background of recent developments in our neighbourhood, which had caused us grave concern, as well as the deterioration in the security situation in Dhaka following the fatal attack on the former Finance Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. S.A.M.S. Kibria. In our assessment, it is only in an environment free from political turmoil and violence that a Summit would yield the desired outcome.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) to (e) India's decision was based on its own assessment of the then prevailing situation. The Government of India reiterates its continuing and consistent commitment to the SAARC process, and to increasing trade and economic cooperation among Member States towards enhancing prosperity of the SAARC region and promoting greater regional economic integration. Strengthening democracy and bringing about regional peace are not within the ambit of the SAARC agenda.

Highway Upgradation Programme

*55. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Committee on infrastructure cleared a mega expansion of the on-going highway upgradation programme, entailing an expected investment of about Rs. 1,70,000 crore over the next seven years;

(b) whether besides two phases of on-going National Highway Development Project, Government are planning to implement a third phase covering 10,000 Kms. of road connecting the State capitals; and

(c) whether connectivity of ports and heritage sites is also envisaged?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The Planning Commission made a presentation on the highway upgradation programme before the Committee on Infrastructure, set up by the Government.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir.

Problems of Indian Fishermen detained in Pakistan

*56. SHRI LEKHRAJ BACHANI:
DR.A.K. PATEL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the fact that Indian fishermen and boats are being taken into custody by the Pakistan Security Agency;

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to resolve this matter; and