

further strengthen, diversify, and expand mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation between India and USSR in the economic, scientific, technical and other fields.]

Construction of a Road Bridge on Ganga River at Allahabad

*99. SHRI BISHAMBHAR NATH PANDE: Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the construction of the road bridge on Ganga river in Allahabad named after Shri Lai Bahadur Shastri would be completed by the time the Maha Kumbha Fair is held in January-February, 1977;

(b) when was the construction of the bridge commenced; and

(c) what were the original estimates of expenditure and what is the amount spent so far on the project?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (DR. G. S. DHILLON): (a) No, Sir.

(b) March 1968.

(c) The original proposal for the project was for 2-lane bridge costing Rs. 225.47 lakhs. In view of the increased traffic expected over the bridge, the bridge is being constructed for four lanes, the cost of which has been estimated at Rs. 651.36 lakhs; Rs. 558.45 lakhs has been spent upto June 1976 on this bridge.

Opening of Cultural Centres abroad

*101. SHRI SHRIKANT VERMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to open more cultural centres abroad;

(b) if so, what are the names of countries where these centres are proposed to be opened; and

(c) what are the names of the countries where such centres are already functioning and the names under which they are functioning?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI BIPINPAL DAS): (a) and (b) There is no specific proposal under Government's consideration at present for opening new Cultural centres abroad.

(c) Three Indian Cultural Centres are functioning abroad at Suva (Fiji), Georgetown (Guyana) and San Francisco (USA).

S.T.D. facilities to rural areas

♦102. SHRI MAQSOOD ALI KHAN:

SHRI SYED AHMAD HASHMI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any scheme to provide S.T.D. facilities to small towns and rural areas; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKAR DAYAL SHARMA): (a) The provision of Subscriber Trunk Dialling facilities to small towns and rural areas is under consideration of the Government.

(b) Development of a suitable automatic trunk switching centre for economically handling the rural traffic is in progress. After the economic evaluation and field trials of the scheme further decision regarding its general introduction in the rural complex will be taken.