

The meeting discussed the setting up an energy ring in South Asia and promotion of regional cooperation in the Energy sector.

- xvi. The second conference of the SAARC Communication Ministers was held in Islamabad on June 29-30, 2004. The Indian delegation to the conference was led by Shri Dayanidhi Maran, Minister for Communications and Information Technology. The SAARC Ministers discussed ways to promote regional cooperation.

Assistance for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

†436. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Central assistance being provided to the Government of Uttaranchal for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra; and

(b) whether there is any proposal to provide subsidy for the same on the lines of "Haj pilgrimage" in order to make this Yatra more comfortable and convenient?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED) (a) and (b) Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) provides Rs. 3,250/- per Yatri to Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) to partially offset the expenditure incurred by the Yatris. (KMVN) arranges board and lodging for Yatris on the Indian side. Government provides free medical inspection and assistance security and escort cover upto Lipulekh Pass, insurance cover and communication links for the duration of the Yatra. A Liaison Officer is attached to each batch of Yatris at Government expenditure. MEA also coordinates the Yatra.

It is the constant endeavour of the Government to make this Yatra more comfortable and convenient.

Nuclear confidence building measures between India and Pakistan

†437. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA:
SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in continuation of improving Indo-Pak relations India and Pakistan discussed specific Nuclear Confidence

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Building Measures including upgrading the communication channels towards reducing risks in South Asia;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what are specific area of agreement arrived at in the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO Inderjit Singh): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir As part of the resumed Composite Dialogue process, a bilateral India-Pakistan Expert Level Dialogue on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures was held in New Delhi on June 19-20, 2004. During these talks, agreement was reached to establish a dedicated and secure hotline between the Foreign Secretaries, through their respective Foreign Offices, with a view to reduce misunderstandings and reduce risks relevant to nuclear issues. The existing hotline between the Director Generals of Military Operations would also be upgraded, dedicated and secured. The two sides also agreed to conclude an Agreement on pre-notification of flight-testing of missiles, a draft of which was handed over by the Indian side.

Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946

438. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether all Central Trade Unions had opposed the ratification dated the 10th December, 2003 amending the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946 which *inter-alia* introduces a new classification of "Fixed Term Employment Workmen";

(b) whether some MPs had urged the earlier Government to rescind the notification which bypasses the Parliament; and

(c) whether Government propose to withdraw the same, and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SISH RAM OLA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Hon'ble Member of Parliament, who has raised this question, had urged the earlier Government to rescind the Notification. The matter has been reviewed and it has been decided to rescind the Notification GSR No. 936(E) dated 10.12.2003.