

Dedicated Community Services in the field of TB and/or HIV/AIDS. India offered to host a meeting this year of experts and community workers, train paramedics from the SAARC countries, and also offered to send medical vans and mobile awareness units to each of the SAARC countries.

The above proposals were endorsed by other SAARC countries.

(c) The meeting strengthened regional cooperation within the SAARC framework. The next SAARC meeting at Dhaka in January, 2005 will monitor the implementation of the decisions arrived at in the Summit of January, 2004 and the 25th Council of Ministers Meeting in July, 2004.

Israeli Trade Consulate in Mumbai

2453. SHRI LALIT SURI. Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Israel has decided to open a Trade Consulate in Mumbai;
- (b) if so, by when, the Consulate is expected to start functioning;
- (c) whether India has also decided to open a Trade Consulate in Israel; and
- (d) if so, the name of the place and by when the same would start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) No.

- (b) Does not arise.
- (c) No.
- (d) Does not arise.

Arrest of fishermen in neighbouring countries

2454. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state.

- (a) the number of fishermen arrested by our neighbouring countries till now;
- (b) what remedial actions, like providing compensation to poor fishermen who are in deep grief due to loss of their boats, have been taken by Government to save the families of poor fishermen; and

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RAJYA SABHA

(c) the number of fishermen released by those countries till now and the total number of fishermen still under imprisonment during the last ten years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH) (a) to (c) As per available information, Pakistan had released 623 Indian fishermen during the year 2003, and 412 Indian fishermen are presently under Pakistan's custody who were arrested during the period October, 2003 to August, 2004.

Sri Lankan authorities arrested 52 Indian fishermen during the year 2004. 46 fishermen were released and six are at present in their custody.

Government, through diplomatic channels, have been consistently taking up the issue of the release of the Indian fishermen alongwith their boats with the Pakistani and Sri Lankan authorities.

Associating China with SAARC

2455. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the recent SAARC Foreign Minister's meet in Islamabad the question of associating China with SAARC for integrated economic development of the region was considered,

(b) if so, the decision taken in this regard, and

(c) the steps taken so far in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) During the 25th meeting of the Council of Ministers of SAARC, held in Islamabad on July 20-21, 2004, the issue was considered

(b) and (c) The meeting authorized the Secretary General to submit a Note on modalities for establishing dialogue partnership taking into account, *inter alia*, experience of other regional organizations like ASEAN with a view to arriving at a decision on this subject during the Thirteenth SAARC Summit in Dhaka in January, 2005. The Note is under preparation by the SAARC Secretariat.