

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Government is aware that some items of Indian cultural heritage are lying in museums in some foreign countries.

(c) Government is exploring ways and means for obtaining a satisfactory resolution of the matter.

South Asian Nation's Joint Action Plan to Combat Poverty

5313. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether SEVEN South Asian Nations on 9th April, 2002 agreed on a joint action plan to combat poverty in their impoverished region;

(b) if so, what were the other decisions taken in the meeting;

(c) whether the South Asian Nations have agreed to ask the developed nations for debt relief, greater market access for exports and removal of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers; and

(d) if so, to what extent these suggestions have been agreed upon by the developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Plan of Action listed sixteen recommendations on internal and external policies. Some of these recommendations include the need for good governance decentralization and empowerment of local governments' micro-credit facilities expansion of social safety nets and better targeting of benefits on both urban and rural poor.

On the external front the conference recommended asking developed countries for increased ODA, greater market access, reducing the burden of external borrowings and debts and preventing outflow of illegal and taxevaded money from the region.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The recommendations issued by the SAARC conference on Poverty Alleviation are issues that have often been raised at International fora like the UN, WTO etc. They are in the nature of on-going process of negotiations between developing and developed countries at various levels.