

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) yes, Sir. Indian Agricultural Research Institute is engaged in hybrid rice research with a major thrust on development of basmati rice hybrids.

(b) Initially, the research efforts were exclusively devoted to development of parental lines for the development of hybrids. As a result the Institute has developed two cytoplasmic male sterile lines of basmati (Pusa 3A and Pusa 4A) and one male sterile line of non-basmati rice (Pusa 5A). Simultaneously some restorer lines have also been developed.

During 1997, four basmati hybrids were tested in national co-ordinated trial for the first time. These hybrids would require testing for two more years as per normal procedure for assessing their farm worthiness.

Seven non-basmati rice hybrids developed by the Institute were tested in the national trial during 1997. During 1998, 14 old and new hybrids are being tested in the national trials.

(c) The hybrids will be released if they give consistent performance during 1998 and 1999 also. Hybrids in general are expected to increase productivity by about 15% in the area of their adoption.

[*English*]

Bilateral Talks

4228. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan has responded to India's proposal made at Dhaka for resuming bilateral talks on issues of mutual interest to the two countries;

(b) if so, the terms thereof; and

(c) the response of the Government to the Pak reply?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (c) At their meeting in Islamabad in June 1997, the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan identified eight subjects for dialogue. These were; (a) Peace and Security, including CBMs; (b) Jammu and Kashmir; (c) Siachen; (d) Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project; (e) Sir Creek; (f) Terrorism and drug-trafficking;

(g) Economic and Commercial Cooperation; and (h) Promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields. They also held discussions about the modalities of the dialogue process but could not reach an agreement. These discussions continued and ideas were exchanged. India made further suggestions when the Foreign Secretaries met on the sidelines of the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan Business Summit in Dhaka in January this year. We suggested a straight-forward approach where all subjects would be discussed simultaneously. This would ensure that the dialogue would proceed in a constructive, comprehensive and sustained manner. Pakistan has offered counter-suggestions. We have reservations about the Pakistani approach. Our interaction on these issues will continue.

[*Translation*]

Insemination Centre

4229. SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to open 60 thousand new artificial insemination centres on the basis of treating every thousand milking cows and buffaloes as one unit for opening one centre to provide such services within easy reach of the farmers in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) Government proposes to have artificial insemination centres at the rate of One for 1000 breedable cows and buffaloes, and to reach insemination facilities to the doorstep of the farmers. Out of an estimated 107 million adult cows and buffaloes, about 75000 are considered breedable and these are proposed to be covered by opening new 35000 AI Centres over and above the existing 40,000 Centres.

[*English*]

Natural Calamities

4230. SHRI NARESH PUGLIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the orange crops in Maharashtra were almost destroyed due to untimely rains during 1997-98;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;