

(b) if so, whether any study about the extent of environmental degradation caused by the plastic waste in rural and urban areas was conducted;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute has developed a cheap method to turn plastic waste into bio-degradable waste; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): (a) to (c) The Ministry had constituted a National Plastics Waste Management Task Force in 1996. The Task Force reviewed the extent of environmental degradation and related issues caused by widespread use of plastics and consequent generation of waste. As per the report, the plastics waste generated in the country is estimated to be 1 to 4 percent of the total: 80,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste generated everyday in the country. The Task Force has formulated an action programme in consultation with the plastics industry which also includes self regulation by plastics manufacturers. As per the recommendation of the Task Force, the Government has published Draft Rules entitled Recycled Plastics Usage Rules, 1998 on 20.11.98 under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 inviting objections from the public within a period of sixty days. These draft Rules envisage prohibiting the use of carry bags or containers made of recycled plastics for storing, carrying and packaging of foodstuffs. The Rules also prescribe a minimum thickness of 25 microns for carry bags made of recycled plastics and 20 microns for carry bags made of virgin plastics.

(d) and (e) The Central Tuber Crop Research Institute has developed a technology to blend upto forty percent starch with low density polyethylene. The granules so obtained can be processed to obtain various plastic products. Under solid burial conditions and in the presence of water and oxygen, the films made of starch mixed plastic have been observed to biodegrade within a period of 4 months to 5 years depending on the composition of the material and presence or absence of an accelerator. This technology is still to be commercially utilised. The rights and responsibilities concerning transfer of this technology have been entrusted to the National Research Development Corporation, New Delhi.

[Translation]

### Growth Rate of Agriculture

\*101. SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the growth rate of agriculture in the country during each of the last three years;

(b) the main reasons for decline in the growth rate of agriculture;

(c) whether the Government propose to take any special measures for the growth of agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The annual growth rates in gross domestic product for agriculture sector for the years 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 are given as under:—

Year	Annual Growth Rate (%)
1994-95	5.3
1995-96	-0.1
1996-97	9.6
1997-98	-1.3

The growth of agricultural sector has been fluctuating in the recent past mainly due to variant behaviour of the climate and weather conditions in different parts of the country. However, the agricultural sector has been maintaining a long term growth over the years.

(c) and (d) To accelerate the growth in agriculture sector, the Government is implementing various crop-specific development programmes relating to cereals, pulses, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane, jute and horticulture crops. Besides, the Government is providing price and market support to the farmers as well as expanding the network of irrigation facilities to more areas etc. In the National Agenda for Governance, the Government has set the priorities for doubling food production in next 10

years adopting regionally differentiated growth strategies, creation of farming infrastructure and more efficient use of resources.

[*English*]

#### **Restructure of NCDC**

\*102. SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether an expert group has recommended financial and administrative restructuring of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) to widen its activities and strengthen its financial base;

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations made by the expert group; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government on the recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Expert Group has made the following recommendations:—

- (i) Re-loaning of the principal repayable by NCDC to the Central Government and the process may continue for atleast 3 years.
- (ii) Assistance from the Central Government in a few account heads in place of existing numerous heads and sub-heads.
- (iii) Exemption from payment of income-tax to be restored as given earlier from 1984-85 to 1988-89.
- (iv) Annual interest instalment payable by the Corporation to the Central Government to be re-deployed as grant in NCD Fund for next 5 years until total grant of Rs. 500 crores is provided.
- (v) Interest rate on Central Government loans may be reduced from 12% to 8.5%.
- (vi) NCDC may be allowed to borrow funds from the banks as per their requirement upto a limit of Rs. 100 crores per annum.

(vii) NCDC may explore the possibility of mobilising funds from the World Bank/ECB and raising deposits from the cooperative sector.

(viii) The proposed National Cooperative Bank should have proper linkages with the NCDC for raising sufficient resources at competitive rates from the cooperative sector.

(c) The Government has taken the following action on the above recommendations:—

(i) The proposal for providing Central Government assistance in few account heads was sent to Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance for consideration. The Planning Commission did not agree with the proposal to avoid imbalances in various segments of the cooperatives sector.

(ii) Exemption of payment of income tax has been taken up with the Ministry of Finance.

(iii) NCDC has been permitted to borrow funds from commercial/cooperative banks as per their requirements upto the limit of Rs. 147.5 crores per annum but the facility of SLR bonds has been withdrawn by the RBI.

(iv) World Bank has been requested to consider the proposal for providing assistance to the NCDC.

(v) The Government has constituted a Steering Group under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Cooperation to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Group.

#### **Advisory Council on Trade and Industry**

\*103. SHRI K. PARYMOHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the allocation for agriculture at present is 5.1 per cent, which is inadequate to meet the growing requirements of funds in this sector;

(b) whether the Advisory Council on Trade and Industry has suggested that the allocation be raised to 7.1 per cent; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?