

(a) whether the Government propose to remove the distortions in inputs and farm produce pricing and land holding policies to boost investments in agriculture;

(b) if so, whether any representations have been received in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and further reaction of the Government thereon?

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

(a) There is generally no control on the prices of inputs. However, the policy of the Government is to provide basic inputs viz. fertiliser, irrigation and power at affordable prices through subsidies/concessions. Incentives are also provided for use of quality seeds and location specific high yielding/hybrid varieties, application of integrated pest management, improved farm implements, etc.

The objective of the Government's pricing policy for agricultural commodities is to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce for increasing production and productivity. The Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) are fixed by the Government for 24 major agricultural commodities for Kharif and Rabi crops. The support to commodities not covered under MSPs is provided under Market Intervention Scheme.

No distortions have been reported or observed in the land holding policy of the Government of India and there has been no change in the policy decided in the Chief Minister's conference held in 1972. However, an outlay of Rs. 43.00 crores has been provided under the Land Reforms Schemes for 1999-2000, Budget providing financial assistance to States/UTs to strengthen the land revenue administration, induction of modern technology in the field of survey and settlement, preparation, maintenance, updating and storage of land records including computerisation and training of revenue, survey and settlement of staff.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Linking of Rivers

*115. SHRI RAMSHAKAL:
SHRI ANANT KUMAR HEGDE:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to constitute a panel of expert engineers to formulate a scheme for interlinking all the rivers of the country for making proper use of water and providing safeguards against recurrent floods in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the time by which such a panel is likely to be constituted?

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

(a) to (c) Government of India has set up a high powered Commission, namely, "National Commission for Integrated Water Resources Development Plan" on 13th September, 1996. This Commission is composed of high level experts and engineers in various fields of water resources development. The Commission, *inter alia*, is to suggest modalities for transfer of surplus water to water deficit basins by inter-linking of rivers for preparing an integrated water plan for development of water resources for drinking, irrigation, industrial, floods control and other uses.

Soil Erosion

*116. SHRI BHARTRAHARI MAHTAB:
SHRI H.P. SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the rivers causing excessive soil erosion in the country, State-wise;

(b) the total area of land affected as a result thereof, State-wise;

(c) the measures being taken by the Union Government to check soil erosion in the country; and

(d) the funds provided by the Union Government to each State Government during the last three years, till date and the funds earmarked for the Ninth Five Year Plan for the purpose?

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

(a) Soil erosion is a natural phenomena which occurs in almost all rivers of the country with varying intensities. Erosion problem is more predominant in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal in the Ganga basin as also in the State of Assam in Brahmaputra basin.