

(c) In terms of Supreme Court judgement in Indira Sawhney case, total reservation including backlog reservation for all categories viz. SCs/STs/OBCs cannot exceed 50% of vacancies filled up in a year. Special Recruitment Drive for any reserved category is not feasible as the current reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs is already 49.5%.

#### Backward Districts

1164. SHRI MITRASEN YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have evolved any new criteria to identify the backward districts;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the names and the number of such backward district in Uttar Pradesh; and

(d) the schemes prepared for their development and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Planning & Development of an area and allocation of funds for the purpose is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State Government. Planning Commission have not identified any area as backward *per se*. However, Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments in the development of backward regions through appropriate weightage for backwardness in the formula used for distribution of Normal Central Assistance amongst the States. Further, Special Central Assistance is allocated to various States, including Uttar Pradesh for Special Area Programmes such as Border Area Development Programme, Hill Area Development Programme, Tribal Sub-Plan etc.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

#### Use of Thorium

1165. SHRI SADASHIVRAO DADODA MANDLIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian scientists have developed the fast-breeder-reactor technique to generate electricity from thorium;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which electricity is likely to be generated from thorium?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (c) The technology for Fast Breeder Reactors has been developed by Indian scientists for generation of electricity using plutonium and uranium as fuel, not thorium. The construction of the first Prototype of the Fast Breeder Reactor (500 MWe) is expected to commence towards the end of the IX Plan period. A reactor based on the Uranium (233)—Thorium fuel cycle is at present under engineering development. The question of setting up power plants based on such reactors can be decided only at a later stage.

#### Index for National Agriculture Production

1166. SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR:  
SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the date on which the index for National Agriculture Production (Anawari Report) was determined;

(b) whether any change has been made in this index; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) The estimates of agricultural production till 1950 were framed based on the traditional method in terms of annas in a rupee (Anawari method) or paise in a rupee in relation to normal yield by eye appraisal. Since 1950, this subjective procedure has been replaced by objective method of yield estimation through scientifically designed crop cutting experiments adopting random sampling technique for all the major crops.

[English]

#### Infrastructure Sector

1167. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA:  
SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission propose to review various Government Departments in order to facilitate more private sector investments in infrastructure sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Recognising the crucial role being played by infrastructure, the Planning Commission prepared a detailed Action Plan for rapid improvement in physical infrastructure, in consultation with the concerned Administrative Ministries and appropriately integrated it with the Ninth Five Year Plan which has since been approved by NDC in its meetings held on 19.2.99. Recognising the need for participation of the private sector in the development of infrastructure both for bridging the resource and also to bring in greater efficiency by creating a competitive environment, the policy framework in each sector as enumerated in the Ninth Five Year Plan makes it possible for private investors to invest in these sectors (power generation, telecommunication services, ports, roads and airports), with a reasonable expectation of an attractive return. The Plan lays emphasis on the adoption of appropriate pricing policy and user charges as also setting up independent regulatory bodies both at the Centre and the State levels.

The private sector is being encouraged/considered to take up projects in different areas which include provision of cargo handling facilities at ports, construction of bypasses, bridges and stretches carrying heavy traffic in the case of roads, construction of bypasses, bridges and stretches carrying heavy traffic in the case of roads, construction of green field and management and operation of existing airports, besides ground handling facilities for airports, augmenting supply of wagons and building/manufacturing/financing assets for lease in the case of Railways, basic telecommunication services as well as cellular services for telecom and distribution and generation of power.

(c) The concerned Central Ministries will be required to take policy initiatives in the light of directions and suggestions given in the Ninth Plan document.

[Translation]

### Foreign Visits

1168. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the countries visited by Prime Minister so far after formation of the present Government;

(b) the expenditure incurred thereon; and

(c) the major achievements of these visits?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The Prime Minister visited Sri Lanka from July 28-31, 1998; Oman, Namibia, South Africa and Mauritius from August 29 to September, 5, 1998; USA and France from September 22 to October 1, 1998; Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica and Morocco from February 7-14, 1999 and Pakistan from February 20-21, 1999 after the formation of the present Government.

(b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) *Sri Lanka:*

The Prime Minister visited Colombo to participate in the 10th SAARC Summit. The Summit placed emphasis and focus on strengthening economic cooperation between member countries. The Summit took some concrete decisions towards establishing a free trade area in South Asia. A group of experts was set up to commence negotiations on a Treaty for establishing a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), which would incorporate binding schedules for liberalising trade. The Summit directed that the Treaty should be concluded and put in place by 2001.

India also expressed its willingness to enter into bilateral free trade arrangements with interested SAARC countries. Sri Lanka responded positively to this offer. An agreement in this regard was signed during the visit of the President of Sri Lanka to India in December 1998.

*Oman:*

The Prime Minister and the Ruler of Oman, Sultan Qaboos had substantial discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues and committed the two countries to promote ties in political and economic fields.