(c)   The Government has set up a National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development to formulate the draft of a National Informatics Policy The Task Force has submitted its 1st Report covering both bottlenecks area and broad promotional measures that are crucial for boosting IT in India. The recommendations cover a wide spectrum of issues relating to telecommunications, finance, banking, revenue, commerce, electronics, human resource development, defence and rural development. They address critical national needs in the areas of information infrastructure, Internet access, software development and exports, hardware manufacture, electronic commerce, R & D in IT, manpower training and education. The Government of India has also announced in the Parliament on 15th July, 1998 various tax incentives for the IT sector based on the recommendations of the Task Force.

Remote Sensing Agency

5091. SHRI N. JANARDHANA REDDY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a)   the details of the activities of Remote Sensing Agency;

(b)   the achievements of this Agency so far; and

(c)   the success achieved in utilising the data provided by this Agency?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) The main activities of National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) are : (i) satellite data acquisition, processing and dissemination; (ii) application services for management of the natural resources; (iii) aerial survey services; (iv) imparting training in remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) applications and (v) development and transfer of related technology to private industry.

(b)   Major achievements of this Agency include : (i) regular generation and dissemination of satellite data products to end-users (about 150,000 data products supplied over the past 10 years); (ii) aerial photography of about 300 towns and geophysical survey of about 70% of country's geographical area; (iii) training of about 5,400 personnel; (iv) carrying out a number of major remote sensing application projects in the areas of agriculture, forestry, water resources, geology, integrated land and water resources development, urban planning, marine resources survey, Environmental Impact assessment, disaster monitoring, etc.

(c)   The major success achieved in utilising the data provided by this Agency include : (i) biennial.

monitoring of forest cover of the country on 1:250,000 scale; (ii) nation-wide mapping of land use/land cover, district-wise, on 1:250,000 scale, for agro-climatic zone based regional planning; (iii) mapping the types and extent of wastelands on 1:50,000 scale, for 241 districts with more than five per cent of their geographical area under wasteland; (iv) mapping saline/alkaline soils of the country on 1:250,000 scale, towards planning their management/reclamation; (v) command area management with increased water use efficiency in selected large irrigated commands; (vi) sustainable development of selected watersheds (through implementation of locale-specific land and water resources development plans - generated under the Integrated Mission for Sustainable Development (IMSD); (vii) pre-harvest Crop Acreage and Production Estimation (CAPE) for major crops; (viii) planning relief operations during drought and flood events; (ix) identification of prospective ground water zones (for identifying drinking water source in about 1.6 lakh problem villages under the National Drinking Water Technology Mission); (x) development planning for metropolitan regions of Mumbai, National Capital Region and Bangalore; (xi) generation and dissemination of Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) forecasts to about 287 Maritime Fishing Centres in the country; etc.

Besides, NRSA has also developed 23 remote sensing data analysis equipment and transferred their technology to private industries for regular production.

UPSC Examination Centre

5092. COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHRY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a)   whether the UPSC propose to open new examination centres for exams in Jodhpur and other parts of the country;

(b)   if so, the details thereof; and

(c)   if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b)   Does not arise, in view of (a) above.

(c)   The present arrangement has been found to be adequate.

Seed Growing Programme

5093. SHRI RAMKRISHNA BABA PATIL :
        SHRI PRABHASH CHANDRA TIWARI :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a)   the amount provided by the Union Government to the Government of Maharashtra for the seed growing programme in Government agricultural farms during the last two years;

(b)   the amount of assistance proposed to be provided to the Maharashtra and Bihar Governments for the said programme during the year 1998-99; and

(c)   the total number of Government agricultural farms running under losses in Maharashtra and Bihar?

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

(a)   Year   Amount (Rs. in lakh)

1996-97   30.00

1997-98   21.00

(b)   There is no proposal so far from the Governments of Maharashtra and Bihar for central assistance during 1998-99.

(c)   State   No. of farms running
under losses

Maharashtra   50

Bihar   220

[Translation]

Construction of Bridges over Canals

5094. SHRI DATTA MEGHE   Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a)   whether the Irrigation Department of Maharashtra is not repairing the demaged bridges constructed over various canals in the State;

(b)   if so, the details thereof;

(c)   the amount spent by the Union Government on the repair of these damaged bridges, during the last three years; and

(d)   the concrete-steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) Irrigation is a State subject. Irrigation structures are maintained by State Governments out of their own funds and as per their own priority.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

[English]

Seed Act and Insecticide Act

5095. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a)   whether the Government of Karnataka has sought amendments to the Seed Act as well as the Insecticide Act to check exploitation of poor farmers by people selling fake seeds and fertilizers; and

(b)   if so, the steps likely to be taken by the Government to amend these two acts and to provide punishment to all those found guilty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) There is no proposal from the Government of Karnataka to amend the Seeds Act and the Insecticides Act. However, Government of Karnataka has made some suggestions with regard to amendments in Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985 relating to the classification of offences; and inclusion of gypsum and sulphur in the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985. The two Acts already have provisions for punishment that who commit any offence under the Law.

Bio-Technology Programme for Dry Land Agriculture

5096. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a)   whether Government of Netherland have prepared a scheme to assist farmers of Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar in the use of bio-technology for dry land agriculture;

(b)   if so, the details thereof alongwith the allocation of funds to be provided; and

(c)   the time by which the scheme is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b)   The overall objectives of the Scheme is to contribute to poverty alleviation, food security and environmental protection through Biotechnology. The specific objectives are:

•   to promote application of biotechnologies relevant to small scale agricultural producers and processors in Andhra Pradesh in such a way as to contribute to sustainable agricultural production taking into account in particular the position of target groups such as women and poor farmers.

•   to develop appropriate technologies through research activities that focus on identified priority problems.

•   to conduct supportive activities required to ensure development and adoption of biotechnologies including training, transfer of technology