

of an Emergency and Trauma Centre at Bir Hospital, Kathmandu, etc. It would decide on any new projects that could be undertaken. The Government also intends to continue negotiations on the Mahakali Treaty with the aim of concluding the Draft Project Report on the Pancheshwar Project at the earliest possible.

Government has every intention of continuing such high level initiatives with a view to strengthening and consolidating close cooperation that exists between the two countries.

BHUTAN

The Prime Minister and His Majesty the King of Bhutan have exchanged letters on a number of occasions since Prime Minister's assumption of office. The letters reiterate the commitment of both countries to continue the traditional and unique ties of close cooperation and friendship that exist between India and Bhutan. Government accords high priority to deepening and further extending the wide-ranging cooperation between India and Bhutan.

Bhutan has unequivocally supported India's decision to conduct nuclear tests. The King of Bhutan sent a congratulatory letter on this account to Prime Minister.

India and Bhutan have a long history of extensive and mutually beneficial economic cooperation. There is a complete free trade regime between the two countries. The India-Bhutan Trade & Commerce Agreement was renewed in March 1995 and is effective for a ten year period. India has been the principal contributor to Bhutan's development. For Bhutan's Eighth Five Year Plan, India's contribution would be Rs. 900 crores. Besides this, India will be funding three major projects in Bhutan -- Tala and Kurichu Hydroelectric projects and Dungsom Cement Plant.

CHINA

In recent years, India-China relations have developed steadily. The momentum of high level dialogue has been maintained and there is growing functional cooperation between the two countries in diverse fields. The two countries have agreed to work towards a constructive and cooperative relationship oriented towards the 21st century. The bilateral trade reached US\$ 1.8 billion in 1997.

Various issues of mutual interest, including the boundary question, are being discussed in the framework of the India-China Joint Working Group and India-China Expert Group. The last meeting of the JWG (10th) was held in Delhi in August, 1997.

[Translation]

Under Ground Water

1. SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the availability of potable water has been

adversely affected due to shortfall in the level of under ground water in some areas of Uttar Pradesh during the recent years; and

(b) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Union Government to provide financial and technical assistance to the Government of Uttar Pradesh for the purpose?

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

(b) Water supply is a state subject. The Central Government supplements the efforts of State Governments for providing safe drinking water by providing Central assistance. An amount of Rs. 552.37 lakh has so far been provided as Central assistance to the Government of Uttar Pradesh for constructing water harvesting structures. A copy of the Manual on artificial recharge of ground water prepared by the Central Ground Water Board has also been given to the State Government to serve as guidelines to formulate area specific artificial recharge schemes to check the declining trend in ground water levels.

[English]

Satellite for Oceanographic Studies

2. SHRI S.S. OWASI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government plan to launch into orbit the first indigenous satellite for oceanographic studies;

(b) if so, the time by which it is likely to be launched;

(c) whether this satellite is likely to help India's attempts to harness marine wealth;

(d) if so, details thereof; and

(e) the other main benefits likely to be accrued by launching this satellite, particularly in the coastal States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The first indigenous satellite for oceanographic studies, Oceansat-1 (IRS-P4) is planned to be launched by end 1998/early 1999.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Oceansat -1 (IRS-P4) will carry two on-board sensors viz., an Ocean-Colour Monitor (OCM) and a Multi-frequency Scanning Microwave Radiometer (MSMR), optimised mainly for oceanographic applications. OCM will assist in harnessing marine wealth through location of areas of fish forages (phytoplankton), which indirectly indicates the availability of fish schools. The information will be useful in providing integrated fishery forecast on the likely availability of fish more accurately.