

- (i) The work front in phase-I has been increased from 1,00,000 GPs to 1,25,000 GPs.
- (ii) Permanently Lubricated (PLB) duct manufacturing capacity has been enhanced by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).
- (iii) Material procurement issues have been sorted out and procurement has been decentralised to Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) executing the project.
- (iv) Telecom Commission has approved the revised strategy to implement BharatNet with optimal mix of different media like Optical Fibre Cable (both underground and aerial), Radio, Satellite to connect GPs, involving States in execution of project.
- (v) An agreement has been signed with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay for preparation of transmission media plan for Phase-II of the project.
- (vi) Different Committees like Empowered Committee, Steering Committee and Technical Standing Committee have been constituted to speed up the implementation of the project.

Non-Bt. Cotton variety

*218. SHRI DILIP KUMAR TIRKEY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that non-Bt. Cotton varieties have made a comeback in some parts of the country, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that the native non-Bt. Cotton varieties are more sturdy and more resilient to the vagaries of Indian weather?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH): (a) Yes Sir, non-Bt. Cotton varieties are sown on 15.89 lakh hectares in kharif 2016 till July 28, 2016 in different regions of the country. State-wise area sown of non-Bt. Cotton is in Maharashtra (5.45 lakh ha) followed by Gujarat (4.08 lakh ha); Karnataka (1.45 lakh ha); Haryana (1.34 lakh ha); Rajasthan (1.31 lakh ha); Odisha (1.26 lakh ha); Madhya Pradesh (0.54 lakh ha) and Uttar Pradesh (0.17 lakh ha) during Kharif 2016. While last year non-Bt. cotton was sown in 8.57 lakh hectares only.

(b) It is a fact that native non-Bt. varieties especially of desi cotton species- *Gossypium arboreum* are tolerant to moisture stress, water logging, salinity, resistant to majority of diseases and insect pests.