

(b) No, Sir. No new posts have been sanctioned by the Government to the Department of Space. A proposal for suitably augmenting the manpower, mostly in scientist/engineer category, has been reviewed and recommended by the Space Commission. The proposal is submitted to the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, for their recommendations, before placing the same for the approval of the Union Cabinet.

Agreements with Israel on space research

2521. SHRIMATI VIJILA SATHYANANTH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several partnerships/agreements have been signed between India and Israel in space research;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that both the countries had collaborated in space research and technology in the past; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Agreement between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Israel Space Agency (ISA) was signed on October 28, 2002 for cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ISRO and ISA on a cooperative programme in the areas of ultraviolet astronomy was signed on December 21, 2003.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) India and Israel pursued cooperation in the areas of microwave remote sensing, ultraviolet astronomy and also formed a Joint Working Group for studying the feasibility of developing an advanced optical camera for remote sensing. An Israel Satellite was launched onboard Indian launch vehicle, under a commercial contract with Antrix Corporation Ltd.

Sector specific groups to review projects

2522. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister has directed to form ten sector specific groups to review pending projects and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether Government has received any report from these groups and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there were any suggestions in these reports for smooth working of sectors and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the details of action taken by Departments and Ministries on the recommendations of these groups?

THE MINISTER OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI D.V. SADANANDA GOWDA): (a) Ten Sectoral Groups of Secretary level officers were constituted *inter-alia*, to undertake, mid-term review of the major policies/programmes/schemes/projects of each Ministry/Department in the Group and to suggest realignment of physical targets, financial outlays and implementation strategies, wherever considered necessary; pinpoint the possibilities of convergence between programmes/ schemes of various Ministries: to recommend new Tax and Non-Tax initiatives for the Budget 2017-18; to suggest new policy initiatives in the sector and to make specific recommendations for job creation, harnessing the demographic dividend and for meeting rising aspirations of the weaker sections of society; to review processes, procedures and institutions with focus on citizen centric simplification/ fast-tracking; to review all autonomous organizations within their fold in terms of their continuance etc; to review role of CPSUs, their Joint Ventures (JV) and subsidiaries and suggest appropriate actions; to review implementation of observations and directions given by Hon'ble Prime Minister/Ministers and PMO in the last two and half years; and to develop foolproof mechanisms for eliminating parking of funds under various schemes, etc.

(b) to (d) Reports from eight Sectoral Groups have been received so far which contain a number of recommendations. These reports have been sent to all Ministries/ Departments with the direction to formulate a time-bound Action Plan pertaining to their Ministry/Departments arising out of the various recommendations of these Sectoral Groups. The Sectoral Groups have also been tasked with monitoring implementation of their recommendations and Action Plans formulated by various Ministries/Departments.

Progress of India Statistical Strengthening Project

2523. SHRI M. P. VEERENDRA KUMAR: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) the progress and details of India Statistical Strengthening Project implemented by Government, State-wise; and

(b) the details of funds allocated for the purpose during the last three years along with the status of its implementation, State-wise?