

Put satellite data to maximum use: PM

By Our Science Correspondent

NEW DELHI, November 19. THE Prime Minister, Mr P.V.Narasimha Rao, has asked more ministries to devise programmes to use satellite data.

Presiding over the consultative committee meeting of members of parliament attached to the ministry of science and technology, he also urged space scientists to use satellite technology to help forecast crop yield.

The secretary, department of space, Prof U.K.Rao, said this was possible when the third remote sensing satellite, IRS-1C, is launched. It will have an infra-red camera to monitor crop growth.

Such a facility would help the government to plan for the import of foodgrains and oilseeds, the Prime Minister noted.

Commending the national space programme, the Prime Minister said it has helped the country in several areas such as communications, broadcasting, meteorology and remote sensing.

The members suggested that space scientists should direct efforts to predict earthquakes, give accurate water tables in different parts of the country, and identify areas rich in minerals. Another suggestion was to use the technology to help farmers with appropriate information for taking up cultivation of different crops.

OTHER APPLICATIONS: One member suggested that the space applications programme should be directed towards studying the various types of pollution in different parts of the country. Members also suggested that satellite pictures should be used to plan the road alignments of different cities and townships to provide smooth and fast flow of traffic.

Outlining the space programme, Prof Rao said 123 telecommunication terminals of various sizes and capabilities (excluding NICNET and RABMN microterminals) were operating in the INSAT network to provide more than 4,500 two-way speech circuits equivalent of 137 routes.

These comprise 74 fixed, 20 transportable and 29 captive networks. Over 100 additional earth stations, including 50 for the Rural Telegraphy Network pilot project in the northeastern region are under various stages of implementation. Also, 32 additional telecommunications earth stations are under implementation for eight different captive/business networks.

DISASTER WARNING: Over 450 NICNET computer terminals are operational; 100 disaster warning system receivers have been installed in selected cyclone-prone coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The INSAT-based disaster warning system has been operational since 1987. Over 520 television stations and 102 radio stations are in the INSAT

network.

Prof Rao said the development of indigenous second generation INSAT spacecraft (INSAT-2) was initiated in 1985 for replacing the first generation INSAT-1 spacecraft built abroad. Two INSAT-2 test spacecraft (INSAT 2A and 2B) are scheduled to be ready for launch (on-board French Ariane rocket) by 1992/93.

The final testing of INSAT-2A is in progress and the launch is scheduled for March next. The government has approved the building of three INSAT-2 operational spacecraft which are planned to be launched during 1994-97.

The members who attended the meeting were Mr Gopi Nath Gajapaathi, Mr Prithviraj D.Chavan, Mr D.Pandian, Mr Anand Ratna Maurya, Prof R.R.Pramanik, Ms Selja, Mr B.L.Panwar and Mr S.S.Ahluwalia. The adviser to the PM on science and technology, Dr Vasant Gowariker, and other senior officials were also present.