

# ari: a milestone passed

The Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, inaugurated in November last year the new laboratory of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, at Pusa, near New Delhi, built as a part of a five-year project assisted by the United Nations Development Programme and executed by the IAEA.

The project as a whole was described in the Bulletin last year (Vol. 13 No. 4). Additional research facilities are being provided under the project for the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay; the Indian Veterinary Research Institute at Izatnagar and the National Dairy Research Institute at Karnal. Some of the major subjects being investigated, using nuclear techniques, are soil fertility; plant nutrition; the use of fertilizer and irrigation; the breeding of varieties of crops improved in their yield, resistance to disease, stem strength, protein content and nutritive value; the control of insect pests; and the raising of production of healthy farm animals.

The newly-inaugurated laboratory is equipped with sophisticated apparatus including an electron microscope, a nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer, a mass spectrometer and an ultra-centrifuge. Collaborating with Indian scientists who have considerable experience in agricultural and nuclear technology is a team of foreign experts led by Dr. Lars Fredriksson, of Sweden, the Project Manager.

At the inauguration ceremony Mrs. Gandhi paid a warm tribute to the UNDP which, she said, always responded to the call of the developing nations and spearheaded international effort for economic and social development.

She echoed a remark of Dr. Fredriksson: that agricultural and nuclear scientists must not be content merely with research in their laboratories, they must "roll up their shirt sleeves, get themselves acquainted with the practical problems of farmers and find expeditious solutions to resolve them". Could there be a more exciting challenge to the scientists than carrying the results of their investigations in agricultural and nuclear technology to the farmers and helping them to have a more satisfying life than had been possible in the past? Science-based technology in India had brought near self-sufficiency and self-reliance in agriculture. This self-sufficiency should now be turned into qualitative improvement, so that people got a more nutritious diet.

Dr. Eklund, Director General of the IAEA, expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for the deep interest she had taken in the project. "We feel that the investment and effort of the UN agencies in this regard were worthwhile, and will have a significant impact on agriculture in India," he said.





Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, Director of IARI, paid a warm tribute to Dr. John McDiarmid, UNDP Resident Representative, for his assistance in the successful execution of the project, and also thanked Dr. Eklund for the interest that the IAEA had taken in the project under his "distinguished and dynamic leadership".

After the ceremony Mrs. Gandhi, accompanied by Dr. Swaminathan and Dr. Eklund, inspected the laboratory and a special exhibition entitled "Atoms for Agriculture" organized for the occasion.

The inauguration was followed by a three-day symposium on the uses of isotopes and radiation in agriculture and animal husbandry research.

The accompanying photographs show the exterior of the completed laboratory; Mrs. Gandhi, in the course of her visit of inspection; and a group of hill farmers with sheep treated with a radiation attenuated vaccine against the sheep lungworm, a common parasite.

