

## A fresh coat for the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences

The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), founded about ten years ago, has at its helm, a new President, V. L. Chopra, who is the Dr B.P. Pal National Professor, NRC on Plant Biotechnology, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi. He took charge in January 2001 from the outgoing President, R. S. Paroda, Director General, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi. Chopra, when asked about his future plans for the Academy, said that he is keen to 'mount programmes that are user-driven'. The 'end user', he stated, 'would be incorporated in decision making right from the start'. He felt that NAAS must in the future play a larger role in providing 'independent and professional reviews' on such matters that come within the Academy's purview. His two top

priorities are, firstly, that the NAAS required a 'younger look' and secondly, the requirement to enlarge the decision-making base in its fold. In case of the former, a move is underway to introduce young Fellows to the Academy. This had not been possible earlier due to historical reasons, he said. To enlarge the decision-making base, consultation is in progress with the Fellows of NAAS; a questionnaire is also being circulated among them for their opinions. Thereby, science-based advice that relied on independent professional views, could be rendered on issues such as World Trade Organization (WTO), which are not only contemporary in nature, but also controversial. Such issues can then be properly addressed, he said.

With regard to Inter-Academy linkages in India, he said that he would like to see

them strengthened. There was now a need to leave disciplinary boundaries alone and come together, putting aside fears of individual loss to status, he added. A model to emulate, for instance, could be similar to the recently created Inter-Academy Panel (IAP) on the world stage for linking World Academies. This pattern could be adopted on a national level as well, he stated. He suggested that a panel comprising members selected from all Indian Academies could function as a Standing Advisory Body. He also said that the panel could help in providing views on various science and policy matters, to both our own government and the world at large, as one voice.

Nirupa Sen

## India–Japan science council holds sixth meeting

The India–Japan science council held its sixth meeting on 21 December 2000 at Kyoto, Japan. C. N. R. Rao and Saburo Nagakura jointly chaired it. K. Yoshihara, M. Doyama, N. Murata and M. Kiuchi (Japan) and C. N. R. Rao, P. Rama Rao and D. Balasubramanian (India) coordinated their respective areas. Tei-ichi Sato and K. Nakashima (JSPS), U. S. Tandon (Embassy of India in Japan) and Rajiv Sharma (DST) participated.

The council reviewed the research activities conducted under its five identified areas of cooperation during the previous two phases of four years each, viz. 1993–2000. In addition to the existing

five areas of cooperation, viz. Molecular structure, spectroscopy and dynamics; New materials, including polymers and nanomaterials; Modern biology and biotechnology; Manufacturing science; and Astronomy and astrophysics, the council agreed to introduce a sixth area of cooperation called 'Surface and interface science'. The council agreed that a cumulative report of all cooperative activities, including Asian academic seminars, workshops, exchange visits and publications, etc. comprising inputs from both the countries would be published soon. The council agreed to continue a quota of five post-doctoral and four

Ronpaku fellowships for researchers from India through DST. Eligibility for these fellowships is being expanded to post-doctoral fellows, doctoral students and full-time researchers in a research institute.

It agreed to increase the budget of the overall programme by about 30% by both sides effective from April 2001. Yoshihara was identified to deliver the third lecture in the Mizushima–Raman lecture series in India. Two Asian academic seminars would be held in India in the fields of 'Advanced materials, including polymers and nanomaterials' and 'Modern biology and biotechnology'.