In this issue

IRS-1C

Current Science planned to bring out a special section on IRS-1C, to coincide approximately with the launch of PSLV-D3/IRS-P3. The IRS-1C satellite itself is remarkable, because of the unique combination of pay loads and its other capabilities. It is considered by all – inside and outside India – as perhaps the best civilian remote sensing satellite launched by any space-faring nation. Because of these and many other reasons, there seems to be much interest in IRS-1C data in the international arena. We understand that EOSAT Co of USA under an agreement with ISRO will be marketing the data to the international community.

The special section has 22 papers with about 70 colour photographs and more than 110 authors participating. It begins with an introductory article, which gives an overview of the Indian remote sensing programme and the IRS-1C mission. This is followed by four articles that describe the salient features of the spacecraft, its imaging sensors, the mission operations, and the manner in which the spacecraft is controlled and operated on a routine basis. The data acquisition, the processing and the dissemination aspects are described in the next three papers. These are followed by a dozen papers that narrate the application potential of IRS-1C. Various facets of natural resource management based on the preliminary results of data analysis are dealt with. There are two articles that explain the marketing and other commercial aspects. The last one presents the future earth observation scenario and gives some details of missions planned by ISRO towards ensuring the availability of necessary data for the effective management of India's natural resources.

The deadline gave only six weeks time to all concerned. It imposed considerable pressure on authors; the remote sensing community was greatly pushed for time for completing the scientific analysis and also for preparing the manuscripts. We shall not deal with the problems faced of completing all editorial requirements, including the printing of the manuscripts and the large number of colour photographs. Even so it was felt both by *Current Science* and ISRO that it is of importance to publish this special section at the earliest possible time to provide a glimpse of the uniqueness of this satellite as also its application possibilities. We would like to place on record the cooperation and courtesy we received from ISRO and its staff, and the hard work put in by our own staff. All these made possible the bringing out of this issue.

S. Ramaseshan

Current Science on behalf of the scientific community it represents, congratulates the ISRO family and the scientific and industrial fraternities that were involved in the successful launching on 21 March 1996 of India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-D3) and the putting into orbit of the satellite IRS-P3. Most of India saw on TV the magnificent take off by this 283-tonne, 44-metre vehicle. It was heart warming to see the jubilation amongst the scientists at SHAR which in a sense reflected the feelings of the entire nation.