

(a) whether there are considerable intra-district distortions in the postal facilities in Maharashtra; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to improve Postal facilities in all the districts of Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN): (a) and (b). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

STD Facility in Konni-Pothana Puram Telephone Exchanges In Kerala

1615. SHRI KODIKKUNNIL SURESH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken to provide STD facilities in the telephone exchanges of Konni-Pothana Puram-Kodekkal in Kerala; and

(b) the time by which the development of telephone exchange in Pothana Puram is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN): (a) Konni-Pothana Puram and Kodekkal exchange are planned for STD facility during the 8th plan period subject to availability of resources.

(b) The 290 line manual telephone exchange at Pothana Puram has been converted into an automatic exchange of 600 lines capacity during this month.

[*Translation*]

Relaxation in Criteria for Opening of Branch post Offices in Hill Areas

1616. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased

to state:

(a) whether Government propose to relax the present criteria laid down for opening of branch post offices in hill areas of the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN): (a) and (b). It is proposed to review the norms at present followed for opening of post offices. Hill areas will also be covered in this exercise. The revised criteria can be indicated only after the proposed review is completed.

[*English*]

Declaration of Roads as National Highways

1617 SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR:
SHRI JANARDAN YADAV:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to declare some more roads as National Highways during the current year; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-Wise?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI K.P. UNNIKRIISHNAN): (a) Proposals to declare more roads as National Highways are under consideration. However, looking at the time involved in processing the proposals, no decision is possible during the current financial year.

(b) Does not arise.