

proposal from the Government of Kerala for setting up of new Post Offices in the State:

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government thereon;

(c) whether any proposals are under consideration of the Government for upgradation of Post Offices in the State;

(d) if so, the details thereof.

(e) whether the Government propose to introduce Speed Post Service in the State; and

(f) if so, the details thereof, district-wise?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : Yes, Sir.

(b) Four proposals were received from the Government of Kerala for opening of new Post Offices. Two proposals, namely Kunnathukal in Trichur District and Mannamaruthy in Pathanamthitta District were not found justified on Departmental norms. Other two proposals namely West Koratty in Trichur District and Nattukallu in Quilon District are under examination.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Following five proposals for upgradation of Post Offices are under examination.

1. Malayalapurzha-Thazham in Pathanamthitta District
2. Kunnathur East in Pathanamthitta District
3. Mundakkal in Quilon District
4. Nedumpana in Quilon District
5. Ekarool in Kozhikode District

(e) and (f) Speed Post Service already exists in Kerala. Kottayam, Kochi, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram, Aluva, Kozhikode and Trissur are under National Network of Speed Post Service.

[English]

Old Persons

1839 SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state

(a) the percentage of persons of more than 60 and 70 years of age and the total numbers thereof;

(b) the number and location of old age ashrams set up in the country for these aged persons who have not been given shelter in their own houses, State Union Territory-wise;

(c) whether any ashram is being run directly by the Government;

(d) if so, the details alongwith the location thereof, and

(e) the provision made for financial assistance to the non-Governmental agencies for setting up old age ashrams?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) Proportion of population of aged persons over 60 years was 6.2 percent as per 1981 Census. The age-wise data based on 1991 Census is under compilation by the Registrar General of India. However, Standing Committee on Population had estimated in 1989 the proportion of population of aged persons (60 plus) in 1991 as 6.5 percent.

(b) to (d). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(e) A budget provision of Rs. 700 crores has been made for the year 1996-97 under the Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Organisations for Programmes relating to Aged for running Old Age Homes, Day Care Centres, Mobile Medicare Units and Non-institutional Services for the Aged.

[English]

Public Distribution System

1840 SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state

(a) whether the Government of Kerala has opposed the move for the reported changes being made in the Public Distribution System;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (c). The recently concluded Conference of Chief Ministers held on 4th and 5th July 1996, which was also attended by the Chief Minister, Kerala, welcomed the proposal to streamline the Public Distribution System (PDS) with focus on the population Below Poverty Line (BPL) and issue of foodgrains to them at specially subsidised prices. The Conference, however, felt that as a large section of the population, who may be above the poverty line, are also at present getting the benefit of the Public Distribution System, suitable measures should be taken to ensure availability of essential commodities at reasonable prices to this section. The Conference suggested that before finalising the Below Poverty Line Population, the States should be consulted.

Government is working out the details on Streamlining the PDS in consultation with the States Governments.

Improvement of Telecom Services

1841 SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state

(a) whether the attention of the Government have been drawn to the news-item appearing in The Indian

Express' dated July 1, 1996 captioned, "Infrastructural problems cripple telephone services":

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(c) the measures taken to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). The details are enclosed in the Statement attached.

STATEMENT

The gap between the demand and supply of telephones over the years has drastically reduced. In the first four years of 8th Plan additional capacity of 61.68 lakh lines has been created for reducing the waiting list drastically. In fact barring a few pockets, the OYT connections are current. To accelerate the momentum of providing telephones to all villages, Government under National Telecom Policy 1994 has allowed participation by private operators to provide value added services and basic services.

Development of Telecom Network on such a massive scale involves installation of exchanges and heavy cable laying. In Delhi two lakh subscribers have been given connections during 1995-96. Only in a few places the release of connections was delayed due to non-availability of cable pairs. In such cases prompt action is taken to solve the problems by using pair gain system. Release of connections are reviewed at the higher level and continuous efforts are made to improve the services.

Benefits Under Public Distribution System

1842 SHRI NITISH KUMAR :
 PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
 JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :
 DR. MAHADEEPAK SINGH SHAKYA :
 SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA :

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state

(a) whether according to a recent survey only 36% families are benefited by the public distribution system in the rural areas and 40% of the total foodgrains are being supplied to urban areas for the public distribution system where only 26% people live.

(b) if so, the justification thereof.

(c) if not, the facts thereof.

(d) the corrective measures being taken by the Government to remedy the situation.

(e) the percentage of rural and urban families benefited by the public distribution system separately, State/Union Territory-wise and

(f) the quantity of foodgrains being sold through public distribution system in urban and rural areas of the country?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) Yes, Sir, as per a survey by National Council of Applied Economic Research.

(b) to (f). Under the joint responsibility, the Central Government make available rice, wheat, sugar, SKO, soft coke/CIL coke and edible oil in bulk to States/UTs, whereas the operational responsibility of implementing the PDS including distribution in rural and urban areas is of the State Government/UT Administration. The Central Government does not maintain details of the percentage of rural and urban families benefited by PDS as well as the quantities sold through PDS in urban and rural areas respectively.

The strengthening and streamlining of the PDS is a continuous process. Matters relating to improving the functioning of PDS are discussed with State Governments in various fora like regional meetings, Advisory Council meetings etc. The Central Government also monitors and progress of RPDS in various States/UTs through periodical reports.

[English]

Dropping of Doordarshan

1843 SHRI B.L. SHARMA PREM :
 SHRI SURESH KALMADI :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the telecast of a number of scheduled programmes of Doordarshan, Delhi have been dropped during the last six months;

(b) if so, the details thereof.

(c) the reactions therefor; and

(d) the action taken against the guilty officers?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Yes, Sir. Some of the programmes were dropped.

(b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) Programmes of Doordarshan are generally telecast as scheduled. However, at times, it becomes necessary to either drop or to reschedule the programmes to accommodate programmes of national and international importance. Some programmes could not be telecast as per schedule because of live telecast/coverage of events like International Film Festival, Wills Cup Cricket matches, Euro Cup, Atlanta Olympics, French Open, Wimbledon 96, Swearing in ceremony of Council of Ministers and state mourning etc.