

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI NARHARI PRASAD SUKHDEO SAI) : (a) and (b).

1. *Automatic Exchanges :* There is an acute shortage of automatic exchange equipment. It has therefore not been possible to establish automatic exchanges in replacement of existing manual exchanges as fast as is desired by the public as well as the department. A phased programme for establishment of auto-exchanges is being followed. In this programme, priorities have been given to State Capitals and District Headquarters.

Dharamsala and Chamba being district headquarters, automatic exchange equipment has been programmed for them for supply during 1978-79 and 1979-80 respectively. The exchanges are expected to be commissioned during 1980 and 1981.

Palampur not being a District headquarter will have to wait for some time more till supplies of auto equipment get augmented.

2. *Microwave :* While no microwave link is planned for any of these stations, a multi-channel UHF link has been planned on the Dharamsala-Jullundur route. This is expected to be commissioned by 1980.

Another UHF link Chamba-Dalhousie is being planned. This will be taken up a little later during 1978-83 roll on plan.

Trunk traffic being low, no microwave/UHF link is being planned from Palampur for the time being. However traffic is being reviewed from time to time and a system will be planned as soon as found viable.

Opening of Provident Fund Office at Port Blair

3138. **SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA :** Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the reasons for which the proposed provident fund office at Port Blair has not been opened so far;

(b) whether a number of provident fund cases due to irregularities committed by the employers are pending with the Commissioner of Provident Fund, West Bengal; and

(c) what specific action has been taken by Government against the management M/s Albion Plywood for their failure to deposit provident fund dues ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. RAM KIRPAL SINHA) : (a) It has been decided to open an Inspectorate Office at Port Blair. An officer has been relieved by the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, West Bengal to take over charge at Port Blair. The Office will start functioning very shortly.

(b) and (c) The required information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha in due course.

Scheme for Educating Rural Workers

3139. **DR. P. V. PERIASAMY :** Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the salient features of the scheme initiated by the Central Board of Workers Education for educating rural workers ;

(b) the locations of the proposed seven pilot projects ; and

(c) whether this programme is likely to be extended to 40 centres of the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR & PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. RAM KIRPAL SINHA) : (a) The broad purpose of the Scheme is to promote among rural workers a critical awareness of the problems of their socio-economic environment and their rights and obligations as workers, as members of the village community and as citizens ; and to help them to assume an effective and responsible role in solving their problems. Under this Scheme, pilot projects from 7 Regional Centres of the Board are to be conducted in 1977-78. These projects would cover landless labourers, agricultural workers, rural artisans, forest and fisheries labour, marginal peasants, educated unemployed in rural areas and tribal labour. The topics to be covered will amongst other things, have a bearing on :

(i) Peasant Movement and Rural Workers Organisations ;

(ii) Rural Development and Transformation ;

(iii) Social and Legislative Measures including Land Reforms ;

(iv) Co-operative Education ; and

(v) Population Education and Family Welfare.