

loans in Maharashtra were being given the facilities as admissible to Adivasis;

(b) if so, the basis on which these facilities were being given;

(c) if not, the reasons for withholding these facilities; and

(d) the immediate steps being taken by Central Government to check the injustice being done to the Adivasi weavers and to students studying in schools and colleges by stopping their stipends as a result of which their studies have come to a standstill?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI F. H. MOHSIN). (a) to (d). The Halba or Halbi tribe has been specified as a Scheduled Tribe in (1) Melghat tahsil of Amravati district, (2) Gadchiroli and Sironcha tahsils of the Chanda district, (3) Kelapur, Wani and Yeotmal tahsils of the Yeotmal district of Maharashtra State. All members of the Halba or Halbi community living in these areas, whatever their profession, are entitled to the benefits available to the Scheduled Tribes.

Some weavers or Koshtis have been receiving benefits as Scheduled Tribes by calling themselves Halba Koshtis, giving the impression that they are Halbas. The Maharashtra Government also seem to have been allowing benefits as Scheduled Tribes to all Halba Koshtis throughout Vidarbha. The Maharashtra Government have been told that benefits should be allowed only to the Scheduled Tribes, that is, to the Halbas or Halbis residing in the specified areas.

#### Electrification of villages in Bihar

165. SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SINHA: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of villages where electricity has been provided in the State of Bihar through loans advanced by the REC, district-wise; and

(b) the target for the Fifth Five Year Plan, district-wise?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (PROF. SIDDHESHWAR PRASAD): (a) According to the progress report on schemes furnished by the Bihar State Electricity Board, as on 31st March, 1976, electricity was provided in 1,554 villages in Bihar through loans advanced by the Rural Electrification Corporation.

District-wise details are given in the statement enclosed.

(b) The size and content of the Fifth Plan have not yet been determined. However, in the Draft Fifth Plan, it is proposed to electrify 1,542 villages in Bihar under the Normal Development Programme of the State, 7,500 villages under the Minimum Needs Programme and additional 4,500 villages under the Normal Programme financed by Rural Electrification Corporation.

District-wise targets have not been fixed.

#### Statement

District-wise position of villages electrified in Bihar as on 31-3-1976 through Loans advanced by Rural Electrification Corporation.

Sl. No.	Name of district	No. of villages electrified
1	Gopalganj	36
2	Champaran-East	13

Sl. No.	Name of district	No. of villages created
3.	Champanan-West	37
4.	Muzaffarpur	61
5.	Sitamarhi	23
6.	Darbhanga	72
7.	Madhubani	20
8.	Saharsa	75
9.	Purnea	64
10.	Monghyr	155
11.	Begusarai	57
12.	Bhagalpur	20
13.	Patna	139
14.	Nalanda	99
15.	Gaya	116
16.	Nawadah	119
17.	Rohtas	121
18.	Bhojpur	42
19.	Santhal Parganas	30
20.	Hazaribagh	18
21.	Ranchi	123
22.	Singhbhum	40
23.	Palamu	54
TOTAL		1554

**Statutory provision for cut in prices of essential commodities**

166. SHRI P. GANGADEB: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating an all-India Statutory provision to bring down a twenty-five per cent cut in retail prices of all the essential commodities in the country; and

(b) steps taken to ensure better price conditions in favour of the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI A. C. GEORGE): (a) and (b). Government are not contemplating any statutory provision for a flat rate reduction of 25 per cent in retail prices. However, since the middle of 1974, several monetary, fiscal and administrative measures have been taken to ensure better price conditions in favour of the consumers. These measures have been extended and intensified since the proclamation of the emergency in June, 1975. The public distribution system for the supply of rice, wheat and sugar through fair price shops has been extended and streamlined. The number of fair price shops has increased from 2.17 lakhs at the end of 1974 to 2.42 lakhs in May, 1976. For distribution of kerosene the retail outlets have been increased from one lakh at the end of 1974 to 2.29 lakhs. The number of retail outlets for distribution of controlled cloth has been increased to 47,000 as against 29,000 before July, 1975. Consumer cooperative retail outlets, both in the urban and rural areas, have been substantially increased during the past one year to ensure fair prices to the consumers. On account of the negotiations conducted by the Ministry of Civil Supplies and Cooperation, the prices of common brands of tea, baby food, matches, soaps, detergents and selected common brands of footwear have been reduced by the manufacturers. Soon after the proclamation of the emergency, State Governments issued orders making it compulsory for traders to display stocks and prices of essential commodities. The Packaged Commodities (Regulation) Order, 1975, which became effective from October 2, 1975, makes it obligatory on the manufacturers/packers to mention price, among other things, on each package.