

financial viability is given greater importance in the Department's policy and a newly opened post office is required to be self supporting by the end of its first year of existence. Parameter in respect of distance from existing post office is also appropriately related to urban conditions where the density of population is much higher than in the rural area.

As regards delivery service, the norm in rural area is to deliver articles from the Branch Post Office on the same day when these are received unless there are constraints of transmission arrangements. In the urban area, all Departmental delivery offices provide atleast one delivery per day for both ordinary and accountable articles, which are supplemented by more than one delivery in a number of urban post offices, having regard to the volume of articles and the time of their receipt.

In the matter of mail transmission, the Department's Policy is to gradually introduce automated systems in the large nodal centres for speedy and effective mail processing.

The Department is also pursuing the policy of optimising the benefits of post office by performing a variety of agency functions like small savings schemes of the Government, payment of pension for Railway pensioners, Employees' Provident Fund pensioners and Coal Miners, operation of the Postal Life Insurance Organisation.

The Department's policy of modernising the postal service lays emphasis on counter services, while computers are also being introduced in other areas of activity like financial services, PLI, Inventory control and Speed Post. Extensive training programmes are aimed at upgrading the skills of the employees. The Department is also seeking to segment its areas of activity catering for business and commercial sector and those for meeting universal service obligation with a view to improving quality of service and generation of revenue.

[English]

Sports Activities in Maharashtra

1776. SHRI MADHAVRAO PATIL :
SHRI SADASHIVRAO DADOBA MANDLIK :

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the details of Centrally sponsored schemes to encourage the sports activities being implemented in Maharashtra particularly in Kolhapur, Nasik and Khed districts;

(b) the funds provided by the Central Government to the State Government for the purpose during the Eighth Five Year Plan;

(c) the funds allocated for 1998-99 and proposed to be allocated during Ninth Plan Period on sports activities;

(d) whether the Government are considering to launch any scheme to encourage the wrestling in the State;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (KUMARI UMA BHARATI) : (a) The Central Government's schemes of (i) Grants for Creation of Sports Infrastructure, and (ii) Grants for Installation of Synthetic Surfaces, are designed to encourage sports activities all over the country. Under the schemes, projects in Maharashtra are also being implemented. There is no separate scheme in relation to Kolhapur, Nasik and Khed districts.

(b) Under the above schemes, Central assistance of Rs. 990.55 lakh was provided to the State Government during the 8th Five Year Plan.

(c) While Rs. 100.66 crore is the Plan Outlay for the year 1998-99, an outlay of Rs. 380.44 crore has been allocated during the 9th Plan for sports activities all over the country.

(d) to (f) No, Sir. Primarily, it is the responsibility of the National Sports Federations to promote the respective sports. Central Government assists them in this endeavour by providing assistance for organising tournaments, coaching camps, international exposure etc. For wrestling, the Wrestling Federation of India, alongwith its State Unit in Maharashtra, takes steps for encouraging wrestling in Maharashtra.

[Translation]

Relaxation of Conditions for Private Operators

1777. SHRI RAMPAL SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are now considering to relax the conditions for private operators to install telephones in rural areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?