

potential of food processing industries. Therefore, various policy measures including delicensing of most of the processed food industries and providing fiscal reliefs in Excise and Custom Duties for the Processed Food Sector have been taken.

For the growth, development and promotion of processed food industry, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries provides financial assistance in the form of soft loan on grant in aid, for setting up/expansion of food processing units, Research and Development, Human Resource Development, Quality Control and other promotional activities under its Plan Schemes.

Cottage and Small Scale Industries can also avail of such financial assistance. Besides, the general concessions being provided to the small scale and cottage sector units are also available to the food processing industrial units in these sectors.

[English]

#### Strike by Postal Employees

\*344. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA :

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether all Postal employees have threatened to go on strike in December, 1998 due to non-acceptance of their demands;

(b) if so, the detailed demands of the Postal employees;

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to meet their demands; and

(d) the date from which these demands have been pending with the Government?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JAGMOHAN) : (a) Two Postal Staff Federations and their affiliated unions had sent a notice for strike on 21st and 22nd December, 1998. In view of the suo moto statement of the Minister for Communications in both Houses of Parliament on 17th December, 1998 extending a package of benefits to Postal Extra Departmental Agents, the strike notice was withdrawn by the two federations and their affiliated unions on 18th December, 1998.

(b) to (d) In view of the reply to (a), do not arise.

[Translation]

#### Status of Industry to Agriculture

\*345. SHRI MITRASEN YADAV :

SHRI TATHAGAT SATPATHY :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to accord status of industry to agriculture sector; and

(b) if so, the facilities likely to be provided to the agriculture sector as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) The National Policy on Agriculture which in the final stages of consideration, seeks to bestow on the agriculture sector, in as many respects as possible, benefits similar to those obtaining in industry such as easy availability of credit and other inputs, free movement of agro-products, infrastructural facilities for the development of agri-business activities, etc.

[English]

#### Use of Hindi

\*346. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to take any measures to make Hindi as an alternative language of the UN in view of the assurance given by the Non-resident Indians to bear the expenditure likely to be incurred thereon after the Prime Minister addressed the UN in Hindi thereby adding to the prestige of India;

(b) whether several countries are willing to lend support to India in this direction and necessary support can be mustered in case the Prime Minister makes effort in this regard; and

(c) if so, the reasons for not taking any lead by India in this regard?

THE MINISTER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) to (c) The question of introduction of Hindi as one of the official languages of the UN has received the attention of the Government. At present, the UN has six official languages viz. English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese. The introduction of an additional official language is governed by the established rules of procedure of the Organisation and would require the approval of a majority of the Member States of the UN which currently has 185 members. An important consideration in getting adequate support would be the additional financial implications for the Member States of the UN for such a move. The introduction of an additional official language would involve significant expenditure from the regular budget of the UN which is solely financed by assessed contributions of its Member States. Article 17 (2) of the UN Charter provides that "the expenses of the Organisation shall be borne by the Members as apportioned by the General Assembly". Thus, even if contributions were forthcoming from non-budgetary sources, the rules do not admit their use for this purpose. In the light of the financial crisis facing the UN, proposal for additional official languages would not appear feasible. However, to ensure the facility of speaking in Hindi by Indian representatives in the United Nations, the Government have been making arrangements for on the spot translation of speeches made in Hindi.