

each state to decide what kind of concessions they want to provide and it is upto them to decide when they should give such a thing. It is under the international agreement that each state has the full sovereign authority to decide these things. And it is difficult for me or anyone else to speculate on this. But all that I can say is that we will augment the switching capacity.

**SHRINARSINGRAO SURYAWANSHI:**

It is true that it is their problem. But will the Minister take this matter up with that Government because lakhs of our labour force are working there in the industrial fields? So it will help our labour class. Is the Minister going to take this issue up with that Government to settle it?

**SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN:** I am as much concerned as the hon. Member is because from my part of the country also, lakhs of people have gone to the towns and cities of UAE. But it is not proper for me as representative of the Government of India or for Government of India to take up this issue. These are the sovereign rights as I have explained. Once again, I assure you that we would augment our switching capacity and certain consequences may follow.

**SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV:** The hon. Minister in his reply has stated that Videsh Sanchar Nigam Gateway Exchange has reached the saturation point so far as circuits are concerned. For whole of eastern India Calcutta plays a vital role for the international calls. There was a proposal to have a gateway exchange at Calcutta. During our time, we requested the West Bengal Government to give land for it. Subsequently I have heard that land has also been given. In view of this, may I know what is your programme for installing that gateway exchange at Calcutta of Videsh Sanchar because this will not only help Calcutta but whole of north-eastern region, which is in a very bad shape about the international calls, including my present constituency Agartala and previous constituency Silchar?

**SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN:** I am grate-

ful to the hon. Member for raising this vital question. Probably since busy as he is always, he must have missed reading newspapers because it came almost in headlines when I went to Calcutta and had announced that these should be made available in this very financial year itself and work is in progress.

[*Translation*]

#### **Post Office Facility in Gujarat Tribal Areas**

\*515. **SHRI CHANDUBHAI DESHMUKH:** Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of tribal villages in Gujarat which are without post offices; and

(b) the target fixed for providing post office facility in these areas?

[*English*]

**THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN):** (a) and (b). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

#### **STATEMENT**

(a) and (b). In Gujarat, there are 4980 villages covered under Tribal Sub Plan. In addition, 554 villages have been identified as being in pockets of tribal concentration. Taking into account both the types of villages, post offices are at present functioning in 1605 villages, leaving a balance of 3929 villages.

At present, the proposal is to open post offices in 10 more tribal villages.

[*Translation*]

**SHRI CHANDUBHAI DESHMUKH:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Minister has stated that the postal distribution facility is not available in 554 tribal villages. It takes 10 to 15 days for

mail to reach those villages. I would like to know the steps to be taken by the hon. Minister to improve the situation in this regard.

[*English*]

SHRI K.P. UNNIKISHNAN: Sir, this is a question which is closely related to the difficulties of our postal system. I am sorry to say that for some years now, the Postal administration has not been receiving the attention it ought to, whether it be personnel or opening of post offices in rural areas as well as in chiefly tribal pockets, because to service these, it requires a great deal of network, planning and investment. It has been our effort to improve this. At the moment, we are discussing this whole question with the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance and depending on the resources available with the postal administration, we shall certainly increase these facilities. I am particularly interested in what the hon. Member has mentioned. I know that in Gujarat as well as in Madhya Pradesh, in Orissa, in Bihar, this is a vital problem and we will have to deal with it. All that I can say is that we will deal with it sympathetically.

[*Translation*]

SHRICHANDUBHAIDESHMUKH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that there is no post office in 3929 villages as yet. In Gujarat, thousands of graduates belonging to Scheduled Tribes are unemployed. Will the hon. Minister consider to utilise their services for this purpose?

[*English*]

SHRI K.P. UNNIKISHNAN: Sir, as per our statistics, we have 18,114 villages in the State. Out of these, 4980 villages have been included in the Tribal Sub Plan and 554 villages have been identified as pockets of tribal concentration. I was just mentioning about this year's plan with which I am not satisfied. But this is a plan which was made earlier. We shall certainly try to take hon. Member's suggestion into consideration.

[*Translation*]

SHRI SHANTILAL PURUSHOTTAM DAS PATEL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that as many as 554 tribal villages still lack postal facility. As per the norms to open a new post office in a village, it can be opened only when the Village Panchayat is willing to make up the losses to be suffered by the post office. I would like to know from the hon. Minister in very unambiguous terms as to whether any relaxation would be given in the said norms in respect of post-offices to be opened in tribal areas so that postal facilities are made available there.

[*English*]

SHRI K.P. UNNIKISHNAN: Well, I have explained it earlier, Sir. But the only question, as I said, is that if funds could be made available by other Ministries or by any other source, I shall be glad to extend the network to the farthest possible extent.

[*Translation*]

SHRI SATYNARAYAN JATIYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, from my own experience in Madhya Pradesh, I feel that there has been gradual deterioration in postal services that were available in the past. Secondly, there is delay in distribution of mail and during the regime of the previous Government, some measures were taken to remove the delay in distribution of mail. I would like to know the steps being taken by the Government to remove the delay in distribution of mail and to ensure that the mail reaches its destination within three days. What steps are proposed to be taken by the Government to improve the service conditions of the E.D. Employees and the postal services? At present the mail is first sent to the district centre, then to the Tehsil centre and by the time it reaches the villages it takes about 15 to 20 days in distribution. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the specific steps proposed to be taken to improve the mail distribution system in the far flung areas.

[English]

**SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN:** Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that delay has been noticed in recent years as far as distribution of mail in many parts of the country is concerned. It has been the endeavour of the Postal administration to improve the facilities. I have already explained our limitations to the House. As far as E.D. employees are concerned, there are more than about two and a half lakh employees and I myself said that these people have been treated shabbily, almost like bonded labour, for the last forty years. And I have personally found it very revolting. But I am helpless. That is why I have been requesting both the Planning Commission as well the Finance Ministry of the Government to take this problem into consideration so that they can be treated better and that would also obviously mean improvement of services. We have also various other plans to improve the services and we hope that with the help of all concerned, we will be able to improve the services.

**SHRI RUPCHAND PAL:** Sir, in view of the fact that very recently we find courier services are adopted in many parts of the country, large number of people including those who associate with Governmental work, are taking the help of courier services. It is a serious reflection on the efficiency of the postal department. May I request the hon. Minister to see that at least Government agencies, at least Government departments do not take refuge to these courier services but encourage postal service?

**SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN:** Sir, it is left to them. I would not like to infringe upon the autonomy of the other Ministries or the Governmental organisations. But I am sure we will take the views of the hon. Member into consideration.

[Translation]

**SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to submit that norms have been fixed for the employees

engaged in dak distribution in towns and villages on the basis of distance in kilometres. I think the employees, who distribute dak in small villages, especially in Maharashtra, have to pass through hilly areas. I therefore, would like to know from the hon. Minister as to whether any separate norms would be prescribed for them?

[English]

**SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN:** The suggestion is noted.

[Translation]

#### **Jute Canvas Bags for NSC Wheat Seeds**

\*517. **SHRI HARIKEWAL PRASAD:** Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the names of firms which supply jute canvas bags for the packing of certified wheat seeds of the National Seeds Corporation;

(b) whether the distribution of 80 thousand quintal of certified wheat seeds was help up in the Rabi season 1989;

(c) if so, the reasons thereof; and

(d) the action taken by Government in this regard?

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRIDEVI LAL):** (a) During 1989-90: M/s. Haryana Supply Agency, Calcutta and M/s. Shree Hanuman Iron Works, Calcutta, supplied jute canvas bags for packing of certified wheat seeds.

(b) Yes, Sir. Certified wheat seeds to the tune of 74,532 quintals remained unsold, during Rabi-1989.

(c) Poor off-take of National Seed Corporation's certified wheat seeds at the prevailing market prices.