

and pass them on to the hon. Member. Is it in Meghalaya ?

SHRI G. G. SWELL : You are the Minister for Energy.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I will find out and get the information. The pilot plant has been set up in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO : Development of non-conventional sources of energy is a national priority. We have agreements for exchange of science and technology with many countries in the world—a very large number of countries. In furtherance of these Agreements we have Joint Commissions on science and technology. Now the procedure in these Joint Commissions is that the country, India or the other country, each one of them, submits those matters on which they would like to have cooperation. I would like to know, in view of the large number of these Joint Commissions, in view of the fact that it is open to this country to submit the item on which they would like to have cooperation and in view of the fact that non-conventional sources of energy are a national priority, why this question of cooperation in non-conventional sources of energy has not been taken up by any of the Joint Commissions on science and technology.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : As far as science and technology is concerned, as I said, the Department of Non-conventional Energy Sources is developing on all fields of non-conventional sources of energy the technology indigenously and wherever we find that technology is available, we take action. It is a question of country-to-country when you say that discussions in Joint Commissions are held. Uptill now, no country has come forward or has shown any interest, but we have gone to various countries to find out technologies like Denmark for wind-mill and to other countries, and we take the best wherever it is available.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI USHA THAKKAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether

any attention is being paid to harness the tidal wave energy ?

[English]

SHRI VASANT SATHE : That is also under consideration.

Licences for postal agencies

*854. **SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN :**

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether licences for postal agencies now being given to private parties are granted only to war-widows, handicapped ex-servicemen and Scheduled Castes/Tribes alone;

(b) if not, what are the categories of persons eligible for the same; and

(c) how many private agencies have been appointed in the State of Kerala ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) The scheme of licenced Postal Agents provides for grant of licenses to companies registered under Indian Companies Act, sole proprietorship firms, partnership concerns or to individuals, preference being given to charitable institutions, women's associations or co-operatives, war widows and physically handicapped persons. Licences are at present being issued mainly to institutions, associations, societies and other socially useful agencies.

(c) So far, 23 licensed postal agents have been appointed in Kerala State.

SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : The answer given by the Minister makes it specifically clear that the licences are at present being issued mainly to institutions, associations, societies and other socially useful agencies. But I

know of several instances in Kerala where certain private individuals have been given these agencies and they do not come under any of these categories. As far as my information goes, some of these agencies get an amount of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 15,000 per mensem as commission. If a departmental employee is entrusted with this function, I am sure that the departmental expenses will not exceed Rs. 2,000 per month. In this connection may I know from the hon. Minister whether the decision to go in for privatisation in postal services has been a policy decision or is it a deviation from the policy adopted in the Department over the years, that is, Communication Department, which is the second largest public utility service in our country.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : It is true that in some States when the scheme had just been sent to our officers, some individuals were appointed; but most of them are individuals who are handicapped and persons of that nature. (*Interruptions*) I do not deny that firstly people were appointed. When we came to know about it we again sent around the circular saying that preference should be given, as I said, to the associations and charitable institutions and things like that.

There are only 23 licensed/postal agents in the whole State of Kerala. There can not be large number of individuals who have been given—may be a couple of stray cases as the Hon. Member has in view. So, it is not a very alarming situation as it has been made out. This scheme has been tried in a very experimental way. It is a new scheme. This has been thought of for a long time. There is no question of privatising our services.

On the one hand we have ban on the creation of posts and opening of post offices and on the other there is a tremendous demand particularly in the urban areas where new and new colonies are coming up, new areas are opening up and we have not been able to provide any service to them. So, it was with this end in view that this scheme was thought of and we are trying to see whether we can solve the problem of expansion of postal services in this particular manner.

We also came to know that some persons are earning a lot of money. Not many cases, just one or two stray cases. Here again, we have revised our commission to make it more realistic. I will inform the House through you Sir, that a commission of 3% is paid on postage stamps and stationery purchased by the agents from the post office in the course of a day. The rate is being reduced to 1.5% on purchases made in excess of Rs. 1000/- during a day. There is a certain commission for registered letters. So, with this new rates of commission, there is no question of any one getting Rs. 10000/- or so.

SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Hundreds of RTP employees are serving the Communication Department for the last six or seven years continuously on temporary basis. These RTP employees are highly educated, qualified and they have been employed in the service on merit. Unfortunately, due to ban on the appointment in the Department, there is a lot of frustration. So also, some sense of insecurity is mounting in their minds. In this connection may I know from the Hon. Minister as to why does not the Government consider appointing these RTP employees in the Department on permanent basis to perform the functions that are being already delegated to private agencies.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : In suitable cases it is welcome if they want to come and take the agencies. The experience is that people will certainly use them like this. But absorption of all the RTPs is a very long standing problem. This does not arise out of this question; but since it has been raised, with your permission, I can say that we are keen that at least a substantial portion of the RTPs should be absorbed. They have been in the service, they are doing good work and our Department is greatly helped by them. But because of the ban, we have not been able to convince the Finance Ministry to what extent they will let us absorb them. We are still in correspondence with them. I have taken up this personally with the Finance Minister and we are trying to find some way. If not all, at least some portion

of the RTPs are absorbed on permanent basis.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : May I draw your attention to the fact that—I am coming from my constituency—one letter posted within 30 kms. has taken eight days to come.

MR. SPEAKER : This does not have anything to do with this question.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : I would like to know whether the ban on the recruitment...

MR. SPEAKER : This is an individual case and this does not pertain to this question.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : I would like to know whether by this ban on recruitment, suspicion is being created in the Communication Department that it is actually a prelude for privatisation of the communication service.

MR. SPEAKER : Madam, this is irrelevant. Mr. Sharad Dighe.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : This is not an individual case Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : But this does not pertain to this question.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : It is pertaining to privatisation Sir.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Sir, I have put a question.

MR. SPEAKER : My ruling is that Mr. Sharad Dighe to put the question.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Mrs. Geeta Mukherjee, your question does not pertain to this subject.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : This is regarding privatisation of this unit. This is happening everywhere.
(Interruptions)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : The Minister should reply to this question.

MR. SPEAKER : I will allow another question to Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee. Even allowing a Short Notice Question, I will not mind. I am not averse to having any discussion.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : So, he will allow a Short Notice Question.

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE : The scheme of giving licence to postal agents is a good scheme and preference is being given to Charitable Institutions, Women's Associations, Co-operatives, War widows and Physically handicapped persons. However, in the cities like Bombay, these people cannot take advantage of this good scheme because of the accommodation problem and unless accommodation is made available to these people, to whom preference should be given, they will be unable to take advantage of this. Therefore, I would like to know whether the Government will consider helping these people in putting up stalls on the foot-paths with the cooperation of the Bombay Municipal Corporation or the State Government so that really these people can take advantage of this good scheme.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : Perhaps one of the reasons why we have taken up this scheme is that if you want to open a post office in the cities, the rent there is very high. So, one of the requirements in the scheme is that he gets commission for doing the work and sales, etc. and he also provides his own accommodation. He has to keep it open for three hours. So, this is one of the part of the conditions that an agent should fulfil, that is, he should provide the accommodation where the neighbours could go for postal stamps, stationery, etc. As regards the suggestion regarding the stalls on the foot-paths, if the Municipal Corporation comes forward to help, we will certainly consider that.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : I want to know from the hon. Minister what specific jobs are entrusted to the postal agents and whether the Government intends to wind up some of the existing post offices and entrust that job to the postal agents.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : Three duties are entrusted to them. One is sale of postal stamps and stationery. The other is booking of registered letters and the third is clearance of letter boxes installed in the premises. There is no question of closing any of the existing post offices and giving them to these agents. Closing of the existing post offices is completely a different matter. It goes on from time to time. But there is no link between the two.

Import of Oxyfedrine by companies in violation of industrial licences

*855. **SHRI VISHNU MODI :** Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that certain Drug Companies have imported Oxyfedrine in violation of conditions of Industrial licences;

(b) whether any such instances have come to the notice of his Ministry; and

(c) if so, the action taken by his Ministry against the companies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMICALS AND PETRO-CHEMICALS (SHRI R. K. JAICHANDRA SINGH) : (a) and (b) M/s. German Remedies had been importing bulk drug Oxyfedrine in violation of the conditions of industrial licence.

(c) The company has been issued a show cause notice for the revocation of the industrial licence.

[Translation]

SHRI VISHNU MODI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw your attention to Question No. 344 which was replied to in this House on 14th August, 1984. In reply to that question the hon. Minister had stated that German Remedies had been issued a licence. This is a company which manufactures drugs. There was a specific condition in their industrial licence that the company would not import this drug and that no foreign exchange would be given for that. But on 14th August, 1984, the hon. Minister had stated that

the company was importing it. On the one hand we are having an adverse balance of trade, our imports are increasing and on the other hand, such companies are importing it in violation of their industrial licence. And now, we are receiving a reply that a show cause notice has been issued. I would like to know from the hon. Minister when this show cause notice was issued and whether he has issued an order simultaneously to the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports to stop imports forthwith ?

[English]

SHRI R. K. JAICHANDRA SINGH : Sir, it is true that M/s. German Remedies were given an industrial licence to produce/manufacture oxyfedrine formulation with the condition that bulk oxyfedrine would be manufactured within a period of two years. This was one of the conditions laid down in the Industrial Licence, that is, within a period of two years they should produce bulk drug Oxyfedrine.

As I have said, they have violated this provision and it is because of this violation that we consulted that Law Ministry whether or not we could issue a show cause notice for revocation of its licence. In 1984 this came to the notice of the Ministry and we immediately had a consultation with the Legal Affairs Department. Since it was a very complex question, it took one and a half years to two years for discussion between the Ministry of Industry and the Legal Affairs Department. It was only in 1986 that finally the Ministry of Law agreed that it was a violation of one of the conditions in the Industrial licence. In March 1986, we issued a show cause notice. Besides that, while waiting for this, we have taken some action. We have written to the CCIE to stop its import from outside India. We have also taken another step by disallowing extension to the Managing Director of German Remedies, Mr. Voss, on the recommendation of the earlier Department, which is now under the same Ministry, the Ministry of Industry, the Department of Industrial Development.