

Dearth of Post Boxes in Villages

*217. **SHRI D. D. DESAI** : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether he is aware that the rural population, in villages with around 1000 inhabitants, are not even provided with a Post Box, clearance of which could be easily done by daily delivery Postman ; and

(b) the steps contemplated to be taken by Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA) : (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

Statement

According to the standards of the P & T Department, a letter box is formally provided in a village which receives on an average 2 letters a day and which is situated at a distance of one mile from the nearest post office or letter box. Provision of letter boxes to villages is thus dependent upon the letter traffic generated in the villages and the distance from the nearest post office or letter box and not upon the population of the village. In villages where letter boxes are not installed, collection of letters is even now being done by the delivery agent or village postman and the frequency of such collection depends upon the frequency of delivery in village. Therefore, the fact that the delivery postman or delivery agent can easily clear a letter box cannot be a standard for planting of a letter box in a village when collection facilities through the delivery agent are already available. It may, however, be mentioned that while there are 1,62,282 letter boxes in the villages of the country as on 1.1.1971, there are only 95,953 villages having a population of more than one thousand in the country according to the census of 1961. It can thus be presumed that most of the villages having a population of one thousand have already been provided with letter boxes. However, steps to extend the facility of collection and delivery of mail to

more villages and to increase their frequency are under constant review by the P & T Department.

SHRI D. D. DESAI : Will the Minister consider providing letter boxes in villages which have facilities of school or at least Panchayatgarhs, in view of the resolution from District Panchayats that such facilities should be provided ?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA : The fixing of a letter box depends upon the number of letters received by or despatched from a village. If it is two letters received by them on an average a day, we fix a letter box there.

SHRI D. D. DESAI : Without a test survey being carried out, how would it be possible to determine the letter traffic. In view of the Government's interest in the rural population and since literacy is increasing, some facility could be made available on the basis of the 1971 census of the village population.

SARI H. N. BAHUGUNA : The population of a village is no index of the need of a village for a letter box. Actually, it is the dak that goes to and from the village which determines the need for a letter box. The Government is very liberal on that, and as I have said in my statement most of the villages with a population of 1,000 are covered by letter boxes because their number is hardly 95,000 while we have 1,62,000 letter boxes all over the country. The Government is always reviewing that and the Postal Department, wherever the facility is needed or called for, does provide a letter box.

SHRI T. BALAKRISHNIAH : Will the hon. Minister consider appointing regular postmasters in the place of Branch Postmasters in the villages, taking into consideration the unemployment problem prevailing among the educated youth in the rural areas and also in the urban areas ?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA : My hon. friend has spoken about the post masters. The question is hardly connected with them ;

the main question is connected only with the provision of letter boxes.

श्री लालजी भाई : अध्यक्ष महोदय, ऐसे दो हजार आबादी वाले कितने गांव हैं जिनमें पोस्ट-आफिस नहीं है, जिसकी वजह से पत्र देर से मिलते हैं ?

श्री हेमचतानन्दन बहुगुणा : मान्यवर, यह तो लैटर-बाक्स का सवाल था, डाकखाने का नहीं है, इस के लिए नोटिस चाहिए।

Assistance by I. F. C. for Modernisation of Jute Industry

*219. **SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA :** Will the Minister of FOREIGN TRADE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Industrial Finance Corporation had sanctioned assistance for the modernisation of the Jute industry and, if so, the amount sanctioned till March, 1971 ; and

(b) whether the amount has been utilised by the Jute Industry ?

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE (SHRI L. N. MISHRA) : (a) The I.F.C. had sanctioned loan assistance to jute mills for modernisation/diversification, to the extent of Rs. 645.95 lakhs upto the 31st March, 1971.

(b) Loans totalling Rs. 261.53 lakhs have so far been availed of by the industry.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : From the reply given just now it seems that the amounts which have been sanctioned are not being fully utilised by the industry. May I know from the Minister whether in view of the fact that due to the dislocation of the Pakistan jute industry at the moment, favourable conditions had been created in the export markets for selling our goods and for sometime to come there can be suspension of financing or lending for the jute mills as it is not required because they can sell easily now without any fear of effective competition ?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA : Modernisation of the jute mills is a must for us. A special situation has arisen because of the developments in East Pakistan ; that is a fact. But we have to maintain our own market ; we cannot depend upon the difficulties of our competitor or on some other factors. Therefore, I still feel that we should go ahead with modernisation programme of the jute mills. As Mr. Indrajit Gupta knows, we have not the necessary co-operation from the jute mill owners ; they should come forward to modernise the mills if this industry has to survive.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Is the hon. Minister aware that the benefits which are supposed to accrue from modernisation in the form of lower cost of production and therefore more competitive selling price are being offset by the fact that the owners are going in for speculation so that instead of going down the prices are being boosted up. That will lead to loss of markets in jute carpets and bags. What is he doing to curb speculation ?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA : I am not likely to go into the speculative aspect ; this is mainly concerned with export of jute goods. It is a fact that the demand for jute carpet had come down considerably last year and it is picking up at this point of time in the United States market and the Western European market. For that purpose we want to provide other facilities also to this industry because this is the time when we should enter the market. I should request Shri Indrajit Gupta not to go into the other aspects, speculative activities etc. I am concerned with the export of my goods to European countries and the American market.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : My point is that speculation is hindering your export potentialities. What is he doing to check speculation ? The possibility of selling goods in foreign markets is ruined because of speculation. What is he going to do about it ?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA : He is a member of the jute advisory committee. We were in Calcutta. I have said that speculation