

distance of four to five kilometres, are given in Annexure [See Appendix 188, Annexure No. 34.] However, post office facilities relating to the delivery of mails and payment of Money Orders are available to all the villages in the country including those of Himachal Pradesh.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) There are proposals to open Branch Post Offices at the following villages during the year 1999-2000 subject to the fulfilment of norms and availability of resources:—

- (i) Mair, District Hamirpur
- (ii) Rakkar, District Kangra
- (iii) Dhaniri, District Kangra
- (iv) Nanhar, District Kangra
- (v) Badukhar, District Kangra
- (vi) Jhanjiani, District Hamirpur
- (vii) Khuthrin, District Hamirpur.

STD/PCO Booths allotted to Handicapped and Ex-Servicemen

†1259. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of STD/PCO booths which have been allotted to the handicapped persons and Ex-servicemen during the year 1999-2000; and

(b) whether Government are taking any effective action to complete the waiting list of telephone connections at an early date; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) While preference is given to handicapped persons & Ex-servicemen in the matter of allotment of STD/PCO/ISD, no separate records are maintained for each category of applicants.

(b) For clearing the waiting list, 45.50 lakh & 53.30 lakh new

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

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telephone connections are planned for released during the year 1999-2000 and 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Villages connected with Telecommunication

†1260. SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of villages identified by Government, which have been connected with the telecommunication system;

(b) the reasons for not achieving the targets fixed by Government;

(c) whether Government are considering to formulate new telecommunication policy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a)

Total no. of villages in the country	607,491
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Villages provided with telecom facility upto 1st December, 1999	346,842
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(b) There has been shortfall in achievement as compared to the targets because of the technical difficulties encountered in MARR technology and also due to lack of basic infrastructure facilities, particularly commercial power supply and efficient road communication in the rural areas in most of the States.

(c) and (d) A new telecom policy was announced by the Government in March, 1999. There is no proposal at present to formulate new telecom policy.

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.