

(b) if so, what is the target for opening of post offices during I UTS;

(c) what are the areas in each State where the post offices will be opened;

(d) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to have mobile post offices in villages and also to install letter boxes in 50,000 villages during the Sixth Plan period; and

(e) by when every village is likely to be provided with a post office and a letter box?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI NARHARI PRASAD SUKHDEO SAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 5,000 Post Offices in the rural areas of the country are proposed to be opened during the financial year 1978-79.

(c) In rural areas, with special stress on tribal, hilly and backward areas.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) Post Offices are opened in the rural areas in a phased manner subject to the fulfilment of the prescribed norms. It is tentatively proposed to provide a letter box in every village by the end of the Plan 1978—1983.

Passport to Smt. Indira Gandhi

783. SHRI AMAR PRASAD CHAKRABORTY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to reply given to Unstarred Question 226 in the Rajya Sabha on the 28th April, 1978 and state:

(a) whether any decision has been taken to issue a passport in favour of Smt. Indira Gandhi former Prime Minister of India; and

(b) if so, whether the passport to be issued will be diplomatic passport?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE):

(a) The attention of Mrs. Gandhi has been drawn to the procedure to be followed by persons against whom proceedings in respect of an offence, alleged to have been committed by the applicant are pending before a criminal court in India.

(b) On IV Mrs. Gandhi fulfilling all the conditions required under the above procedure, she will be issued a diplomatic passport.

Job guarantee to apprentices

784. SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA;

SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-PATRO :

Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of trained apprentices, who have completed or are likely to complete their courses, are not guaranteed any job in any industrial concerns or Government departments;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard;

(c) whether Government propose to amend the Apprenticeship Act, 1961, to guarantee employment to the apprentices after the completion of training; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof and by what Bill in this behalf is likely to be brought before the Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVI VARDRA VARMA): (a) and (b). ^ The Apprentices Act, 1961, does not guarantee jobs to trained apprentices. The basic objective of the Act is to equip the apprentice with skills in his