

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps being taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM (SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA) : (a) and (b) At the instance of this Ministry, the public sector oil companies namely, the Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and Indo-Burma Petroleum Company Limited, have launched a programme of converting ultimately a large number of their retail outlets in the rural and semi-urban areas into multipurpose rural distribution centres. Apart from the various petroleum products, these centres will also sell many commodities and services required by the rural population such as certified seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs, and essential commodities like controlled cloth, common house-hold drugs, soaps, vanaspati and cooking oil (in sealed tins), tyres and tubes for cycles, tractor parts, torch cells, etc. Up till now one hundred and fourteen such centres have already been set up in various parts of the country.

*257. [Transferred to the 29th January, 1976.]

Demand of Higher Rate of Royalty for Crude by Gujarat

*258. SHRI RAMLAL D. PARIKH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Gujarat Government during the last presidential rule requested the Central Government to increase the royalty rates on crude oil found in Gujarat in accordance with the full posted price of crude oil;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the present Legislative Assembly of Gujarat passed unanimously a resolution requesting the Central Government to fix the oil royalty at a higher percentage and making it *ad-valorem*; and

(c) if so, what steps are proposed to be taken by the Government of India in this behalf ?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM (SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The matter is under consideration.

Medicine Shops on Important Railway Platforms

259. SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHARAN : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Railways propose to open medicine shops on the platforms of important Railway Stations; and

(b) if so, by when this is proposed to be done ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MOHAMMAD SHAFI QURESHI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) To start with, Chemist stalls at Delhi, New Delhi, Bombay V. T., Bombay Central, Madras, Sealdah and Howrah would be opened shortly as soon as formalities are completed.

Oil Drilling Operations in Himachal Pradesh

*260. SHRI SYED NIZAM-UD-DIN : SHRI GIAN CHAND TOTU : SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA: SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA MENON:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have selected the site No. 1 Ram-shahr (Himachal Pradesh) for deep oil drilling operations; and

(b) if so, by when the work is expected to start ?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM (SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission has planned to drill a deep well near Ramshahr in the Solan district of Himachal Pradesh. Preparatory work such as survey of the site and approach road, acquisition of land, etc. is in hand and other administrative details are being worked out. Drilling is likely to start in the second half of 1976.