

(b) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI C. M. STEPHEN):
(a) and (b) The trunk automatic exchange equipment at Asansol and Delhi has been installed. The installation of the long distance equipment for providing the required number of circuits between the two places is on progress. The route is expected to be commissioned during the current financial year 1980-81.

Villages without Post Offices

54. **SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of villages of our country which do not have post offices; and

(b) the steps so far taken by Government to open post offices in these villages?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI C. M. STEPHEN):
(a) According to the latest information available, the number of villages in the country enumerated in 1971 census not yet provided with post offices is 4,57,721.

(b) there is an ongoing programme for opening of post offices in normal rural areas as well as in hilly, backward and tribal areas on a subsidised basis subject to certain norms of population, income and distance. Under this programme post offices are opened in a phased manner in accordance with the targets fixed in the successive Five Year/Annual Plans. As on 31st March, 1980, the total number of post offices in India was 1,37,013 out of which 1,22,857 were in rural areas.

Tuna Fishing

55. **SHRI A. NEELALOHITHADASAN:** Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether at present there is any organised Tuna Fishing in India;

(b) if so, the agency which is conducting it;

(c) whether the Central Government are aware that considerable Tuna Fishing is done in the Indian Ocean by vessels belonging to foreign countries; and

(d) if so, what is the value of catches of Tuna by non-Indian enterprises?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) and (b) The all-India Tuna landings as estimated by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute were 13748 tonnes in 1978. Organised Tuna fishing, however, has been taken up by the Fisheries Department, of Lakshadweep Administration which has introduced about 191 mechanised boats consisting of Pole and Line vessels, Long Liners and Trolling vessels through subsidies and loan for purchase of boats by the fishermen for exploiting the tuna resources near the Islands. Of the total production of fish near the Islands ranging from 2000 to 4000 tonnes per year, tuna comprises about 54 per cent.

(c) and (d) The Central Government is aware that considerable tuna fishing is done in the Indian Ocean by vessels belonging to foreign countries. According to the FAO fisheries statistics, during 1977 about 1.65 lakh tonnes of tunas were caught in the entire Indian Ocean. The corresponding figure of tuna catches in the western Indian Ocean from the west coast of India to the east coast of Africa was 1.17 lakh tonnes during 1978. The value of the fish is difficult to estimate because of the varieties of tunas and their price in various consuming countries.

Diseases of Coconut Trees

56. **SHRI A. NEELALOHITHADASAN:** Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any permanent cure of diseases of coconut trees in the