It may have only 3,000 words, but it is the first step to a potentially huge resource for the country’s 50 lakh deaf citizens and almost 20 lakh people with speech disabilities. The country’s first sign language dictionary, in the works for one and a half years, was launched by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot on Tuesday.

The aim of developing the Indian Sign Language Dictionary was to remove communications barriers between the deaf and hearing communities, said Mr. Gehlot. The dictionary, developed by the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre, has subtitled videos depicting the various signs. It includes legal, medical, academic and technical terms.