

Shri A. M. Thomas: May I know from where the personnel working in these post offices in Jammu and Kashmir, are drawn, from the inhabitants of that area or from outside?

Shri Raj Bahadur: They are drawn from the inhabitants of the area in most cases.

Shri A. M. Thomas: May I further enquire whether the allegation reported to have been made by the ex-Prime Minister of Kashmir, to the effect that discrimination is being made in the matter of appointments to the Communication Department, has come to the notice of the Government; and if so, is there any foundation for that allegation?

Shri Raj Bahadur: I consider that allegation as unfortunate, and I may add that it is totally unfounded.

Th. Lakshman Singh Charak: Do the Government propose to increase the number of post offices in the villages of Jammu and Kashmir?

Shri Raj Bahadur: For the information of the hon. Member, I may say that we have more than doubled the number of post offices in Jammu and Kashmir State, ever since 15th August 1947. It is now 269, as against about 130 previously.

Shri N. M. Lingam: May I know whether post offices have been opened in Jammu and Kashmir, in villages having a population of less than 2,000?

Shri Raj Bahadur: Every case depends on its merits. In most cases, we have followed a uniform policy, governing the opening of new post offices throughout the country, namely that of opening post offices for villages with a population of above 2,000 but in certain cases, we might have allowed some concession.

PARLAKIMEDI LIGHT RAILWAY

*695. **Shri Sanganna:** (a) Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state whether Government are aware that many breaches have been caused to the Parlakimedi Light Railway line

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(Eastern Railway Zone) by the floods during the month of June, 1953?

(b) If so, what is the total value of damage caused?

(c) Were communications dislocated for some period due to these breaches?

(d) Do Government propose to make any improvements to avoid such breaches in future?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Shahnawaz Khan): (a) The reply is in the affirmative.

(b) Rs. 5,000 approximately.

(c) Yes, for about 3 days.

(d) Question of providing additional waterways etc. is under consideration.

Shri Sanganna: May I know the names of places at which the breaches were caused?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: There is no specific name of the place where these breaches occurred. They were caused on a section of the railways.

Shri B. C. Das: Has the attention of the Government been drawn to the fact that breaches are an annual occurrence there?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: Yes. Government are aware of that, and they are taking adequate steps to cope up with them, by providing additional waterways.

Shri B. C. Das: Are the Government considering the question of changing the light railway into a metre gauge railway?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: No, Sir.

Shri Sanganna: May I know whether these breaches have been caused on account of the fact that there is a narrow drainage system provided by the culverts under bridges?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: They are being widened, and additional waterways are also being provided.