

No decision has been taken so far in regard to setting up of a nuclear plant in Kerala.

Programmes, funds have been allocated and targets fixed for installation of Solar Thermal Energy Systems in Kerala as per details given below :

Under the Solar Thermal Extension

| Year | System | Target | Allocation |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| 1985-86 | Solar Water Heating System | 12 | Rs. 12.30 lakhs |
| | Solar Timber Kilns | 1 | Rs. 0.40 Lakh |
| | Solar Disallination System | 2 | Rs. 0.20 Lakh |
| | Solar Air Heaters/Solar Cold Storage | 1 | Rs. 1.00 Lakh |
| | Domestic Solar Water Heating System | 10 | Rs. 0.30 Lakh |

The State Government of Kerala is implementing the programme, selection of sites and execution of work is being done by it directly.

Honey Production

4363. SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) the approximate quantity and value of honey production in the country; and

(b) the steps taken by Government for the proper exploitation and development of honey production in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) Production of Honey under KVIC during 1984-85 in the country was 55,07,366 kilos valued at Rs. 936.25 lakhs besides 19,511 kilos of wax worth Rs. 6.25 lakhs was also produced.

(b) KVIC extends technical assistance including distribution of equipment as well as financial assistance for setting up of medium and semi-commercial apiaries and marketing facilities including working capital loan for purchase of honey from bee-keepers for the development of bee-keeping industry

to State KVI Boards registered institutions and bee-keepers cooperatives. Central Bee-Research Institute, Pune with its units located in bee-keeping regions attends to improving the strains of bees, productivity of bees by better management techniques and study of useful plants etc.

Opening and upgradation of branch post offices in Karnataka

4364. SHRI H. B. PATIL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of branch post offices proposed to be opened in Karnataka, Division-wise during the year 1986-87; and

(b) the number of branch post offices which are to be upgraded to sub-post offices in Karnataka during the current financial year ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : (a) On account of the continuing ban on creation of posts, no programme of opening of new post offices could be implemented in Karnataka or in other postal Circles. However, the Department is now taking a fresh look at the norms followed for opening of post offices taking into consideration the recommendations made by the Committee of

Enquiry on Extra-Departmental System and other relevant circumstances, the objective being that within the limited funds made available under the Annual Plans, proposals in respect of the relatively less developed areas may be formulated and cleared with the Ministry of Finance on special basis. In this exercise, the genuine requirements of all the Circles, including Karnataka are to be considered.

(b) There are no proposals under consideration for conversion of extra-departmental branch offices into departmental sub offices as such conversion being a non-Plan activity attracts the ban on creation of posts.

Closing of post offices in Allahabad

4365. SHRI AMITABH BACHCHAN : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a one-man committee constituted by Government has recommended the closure of 35,000 post offices throughout the country;

(b) whether in their place the Department proposes to issue licences to postal agencies to run these services;

(c) whether in the Allahabad Division some post offices have already been closed down and some more are in the process of being closed without any alternative arrangements having been made in their place; and

(d) if so, the steps Government propose to ensure that these postal facilities are not withdrawn before making any satisfactory alternative arrangements ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : (a) This is not exactly so. What the Committee of Enquiry on Extra-departmental System (1986) has recommended is that—

(i) Branch post offices which do not satisfy the condition of minimum distance of 3 kms save those specifically authorised by the Director

General Postal Services should not be retained;

(ii) Where branch offices are working at a higher cost, the first effort should be to reduce the expenditure by reduction of establishment through a judicious combination of duties, and

(iii) there should be no concept of permanency and that an extra-departmental branch office should be retained only if the annual review show that the level of financial subsidy allowed to rural post offices is not exceeded.

It does not necessarily follow from the above recommendations that a pre-determined number of post offices should be closed. The spirit of the recommendation is that while the existing comprehensive postal coverage of the rural sector should be continued and improved where necessary, the prescribed parameters in respect of minimum distance between post offices and the permissible limits of losses should be strictly enforced in public interest. The question whether any post offices need to be closed in the light of these criteria will primarily depend on the judgement of the Circle/Regional postal authorities who are bound to ensure that postal facilities are available within a reasonable distance in every case where discontinuance of an-existing post office becomes justified.

(b) The scheme of Licensed Postal Agents is basically intended to provide a minimum level of postal service in new areas in view of the ban on creation of posts and other constraints on opening of new post offices. There is no policy to the effect that in every case where the discontinuance of an existing post office becomes necessary, a Licensed Postal Agent should be set up. This would depend on the requirements in each case.

(c) No Sir, this is not exactly so. The position is that one extra-departmental sub post office which was situated within a close distance of Ranipur post office in Allahabad and which did not have sufficient postal work and was also incurring losses was discontinued. Two other cases were considered but no final decision has been taken.