

diverted to Bihar though U.P. and Bihar are not in the same grid. Apart from the Grid, Bihar has links with other States also.

SHRI KALI PRASAD PANDEY : I have asked that the old grids meet the needs of the urban areas, whereas the people living below the poverty line are living in the rural areas. What are your schemes for them. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : You can ask only two supplementaries. There is no time left now.

SHRI RAM PYARE PANIKA : Just now, the hon. Minister has stated that there is no proposal for setting up a national grid. You might remember that Rajyadhyaksha Committee had stated in their report that there were many areas in the country where thermal power stations could not be set up and there were also such areas where hydro-electric power could not be generated. Keeping all these things in view, the Government had decided to formulate a scheme to set up a national grid. But the hon. Minister has just now stated that only regional grids would do. Keeping in view the interests of the States, I want to know whether Government have abandoned that scheme ?

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN : It appears that I have not been able to make the hon. Member understand what I mean. What I have said is that when regional grids would be set up, the States falling under that region would be integrated through the regional grid and when the regional grids would be strengthened and start functioning fully in an integrated manner, these regional grids would themselves form a national grid. Therefore, there is no question of abandoning that scheme.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Shrimati Usha Choudhary...Not present. Shri Mohanbhai Patel...Not here. Shri Chintamani Jena...Not present. Shri Braja Mohan Mohanty...He is also not present. Shri H. N. Nanje Gowda...Not present. Shri C. P. Thakur.

SHRI C. P. THAKUR : Qn. No. 134.

MR. SPEAKER : Let us thank him for breaking the monotony.

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE) *rose.*

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Why is he replying ?

MR. SPEAKER : He has been delegated the authority.

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I am replying on behalf of my colleague Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha.

(Interruptions)

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Changes take place in Government so fast that it is difficult for us to keep pace with them.

MR. SPEAKER : Please keep your mind alert.

Closing of Branch and Sub-Post Offices

***134. SHRI C. P. THAKUR† :**
SHRI ZAINUL BASHER :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that in spite of the increasing demand in the country for opening more and more post offices, the Department has closed a large number of branch and sub-post offices;

(b) if so, the number of branch and sub-post offices closed during the last one year; and

(c) the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE) : (a) and (b). During the year 1-4-84 to 31-3-85, 37 sub-post offices and 41 branch post offices were closed. The number for the period 1-4-85 to 31-10-85 is 72 sub-post offices and 250 branch post offices. These figures are not large taking into account the fact that the total number of post offices in the country exceeds 1,44,000.

(c) Reasons for closure in each case are being ascertained and the information will be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI C. P. THAKUR : Sir, the reply does not appear to be adequate because, suppose there are a large number of post offices in one district and there is no post office in another district, that does not serve the purpose of that district. Because the Minister of the concerned Department is not replying, I wanted to know from this Hon. Minister has many applications for opening post offices in Patna in Bihar are pending with the Government ?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : As far as Bihar is concerned, in this period no sub-post office or branch post office has been closed. So, so far as your region is concerned, you don't have to worry.

(Interruptions)

You have asked about closure, about opening I don't have the figures. If you ask a separate question I will supply the information.

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER : One of the main reasons for the closure of the post offices is that many of the land lords don't like to rent out their buildings to P and T Department because the P and T Department is paying very very low rent. In view of that fact, will the Central Government prevail upon the State Governments to see that they earmark some of the sites for building post offices, so that they own their own buildings?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : We have no such complaints that for want of space post offices could not be opened. But the consideration that in the long run it will be advantageous for us to have our own premises is a matter for consideration.

DR. D. N. REDDY : When there is demand in the rural areas for opening of more branch post offices and in view of the Government's intention to develop the rural areas, is the Government justified in closing some of the existing sub-post offices ? Will the Hon. Minister give an assurance that no more sub-post offices will be closed till the reasons for the closure are placed before this House, as the Minister promised ?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : It is our desire always to open more post offices in the rural areas, in the inaccessible areas, so as to serve our population to the maximum extent. Even from the present figures, Sir, out of about 1,44,700 post offices, the urban area post offices are 15,325 whereas the rural area post offices are 1,29,373. Normally we have the criterion that within a radius of three kilometres in the rural areas if there is not post offices, the policy is to open a post office there.

[Translation]

SHRI MANVENDRA SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I want to ask from the hon. Minister whether the Government are making any efforts to improve the standard of postmen, by revising their pay scales, because at present their standard is very poor.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Sir, there is no such proposal before us at present, but we always pay attention towards the betterment of our employees.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Next question—

Shri Mukul Wasnik...

Shri Indrajit Gupta...

Then next question—

Shri Lakshman Mallick...

Shri Prakash V. Patil.

Rice in the prices of Non-levy Cement

*136. SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL :
SHRI LAKSHMAN MALLICK :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the sharp rise in the prices of non-levy cement;

(b) if so, whether Government have decided to import cement in order to stabilise the prices at reasonable levels; and