

(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

(c) if so, the details regarding the policy of Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) Non-levy Cement is free from price and distribution control. However, in the beginning of this year, there was an increase in the demand for non-levy cement due to increase in the tempo of construction activities particularly in important urban centres and also the anxiety of the people to complete the works before the onset of the monsoon resulting in a temporary spurt in prices of non-levy cement. The prices have started coming down from the month of August 1985 onwards.

(b) and (c). Against imports authorised in 1984-85, contracts have been entered into by the State Trading Corporation of India for import of 4 lakh tonnes, out of which, a quantity of 1.31 lakh tonnes has already been effected. No decision in regard to further imports to be authorised, if any, has been taken so far.

SHRI KAMAL NATH : Question No. 137.

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

SHRI KAMAL NATH : Has his portfolio been changed, Sir ?

MR. SPEAKER : Where were you ?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : You please bear with me for to-day.

MR. SPEAKER : Where you here or you have just come ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA) : It is a lack of communication.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I will fill that gap.

Telephone Connections under New Special OYT Scheme

*137. SHRI KAMAL NATH† :
DR. G. VIJAYA RAMA RAO :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether special OYT telephones will hence forth be given within a month on payment of Rs. 25,000;

(b) whether this decision will result in further delays in giving telephones to other categories; and

(c) whether this would also result in further delays in release of telephones in rural areas and specially for medical staff ?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE) : (a) No, Sir. There is no such scheme at present.

(b) and (c). Does not arise in view of part (a) above.

SHRI KAMAL NATH : The Minister has replied to the very first part of my question that there is no such scheme. But there was a newspaper report. Obviously it is a matter of great concern because the affluent people are always able to get telephones. I do not know the basis of such a scheme. But is such a scheme under consideration or under active consideration at all ?

MR. SPEAKER : He has said 'No'.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : We always keep on considering good ideas... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI KAMAL NATH : My whole question is based on communication. So I am asking him to communicate whether...

MR. SPEAKER : Has there been any communication gap between him and you ?

SHRI KAMAL NATH : On the floor of the House—Yes, but outside—No.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : If the hon. Member gives some ideas or suggestions or if they come from any other quarter and if we find that they are in national interest and they are in the interests of the consumer, we will always be open to good suggestions and even this suggestion will be considered.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD : And that 'if' is very important.