

### Opening of branch Post Offices

2214. SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had taken a Policy decision to open branch post offices in gram panchayat headquarters in a phased manner where these offices did not exist;

(b) i what is the present position thereof;

(c) what is the number of such post offices opened in gram panchayat headquarters so far, after the decision was taken; and

(d) whether Government propose to open any more new branch post offices in the country to ensure early postal services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) No Sir. There is no policy decision to the effect that all gram panchayat headquarters should be provided with branch post offices in a phased manner. So far, branch post offices have been opened on the basis of the following criteria:

(i) The proposed post office should be at a distance of 3 Kms or more from the nearest existing post office.

(ii) The population of the village should be not less than 2,000 in normal rural areas and 1,000 in backward and tribal areas; and

(iii) the proposed post office should earn income equal to 25 per cent of the cost in normal rural areas and 10 per cent of the cost in backward and tribal areas.

The concession granted to gram panchayats is that villages which are headquarters of gram panchayats are exempted from the condition of minimum population.

(c) The number of post offices opened so far at headquarters of gram panchayat is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(d) As on 1-8-1986 there were 1,28,313 rural post offices in the country which provided postal services to all the 5,79,134 villages. Opening of more post offices does not necessarily expedite postal deliveries as speed of mail depends mainly on the type of transport as well as regularity of the transport services.

However the Department is at present taking a fresh look at the norms for opening of post offices. The justification for opening of more post offices in rural areas is proposed to be re-assessed in the light of the revised norms. Thereafter, the matter has to be taken up with the Ministry of Finance as under the existing ban orders the Department cannot create new posts within its own powers.

### Nuclear Power Plants

2215. SHRI V. NARAYANASWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state

(a) whether generation of nuclear power is considered to be the safest and pollution free, as compared to hy-del and thermal power; and

(b) what is the number of nuclear energy plants set up in the country during the Sixth Five Year Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS AND SPACE (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) Our nuclear plants have in-built design features to ensure safe operation and prevent any adverse impact on the environment.