

(b) whether it is a fact that Government, Private and Co-operative Sectors pay different prices of sugarcane to the farmers; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) to (c) The Government fixes only the statutory minimum cane price payable by each factory linked to a base recovery with a premium for higher recoveries. This will differ from factory to factory depending on recovery. No factory can pay less than this. The factories may, however, pay higher prices as dictated by the forces of supply and demand. In the latter case the prices paid may in some zones be uniform, if the agreed prices are fixed without linkage to recovery. The practice (whether among private, cooperative or Government factories) differs from State to State depending on local circumstances and the ability of factories to pay above the statutory minimum.

Opening of Post Offices

256. SHRI M. BASAVARAJU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Post Offices likely to be opened during 1981-82; and

(b) the number of Post Offices opened during 1980-81?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL): (a) During the year 1981-82, it is proposed to open 1600 rural post offices in the country. There are no specific targets for opening of post offices in urban areas.

(b) The total number of post offices opened during 1980-81 (as on 31-2-80) is 1725.

Poor efficiency of Telecommunication Wing

257. SHRI M. BASAVARAJU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that poor efficiency of the Telecommunication Wing of the Ministry has been a cause of grave inconvenience to the public;

(b) the number of post offices provided with public Trunk and Local Telephone facilities separately, *vis-a-vis* the number of Post Offices without any telephones at the end of 1980; and

(c) by what time Government intends to provide P.C.O.s. in all the Rural Post Offices?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL): (a) It is not correct to say that poor efficiency of telecommunication wing of the Ministry has been a cause of grave inconvenience to the public. The Department is not able to meet the growing demand of telephone connections and other telecommunication facilities as provision of adequate communication facilities requires considerable financial resources. These are, however, being provided in a phased manner.

The telecommunication services get affected due to power cuts imposed by electricity authorities, cable breakdowns caused by road digging activities of different Civic agencies etc. During such occasions the officers and staff of the telephone Department work round-the-clock in adverse conditions to set right the telephone and other services expeditiously.

(b) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

(c) Public Telephones are provided in rural areas as per the liberal policy laid down by the Department. The Post Offices covered by the policy are proposed to be provided progressively with public telephones