

- (b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) are in financial distress. Government has taken several measures to revive the two CPSUs. These measures include:

- (i) Treatment of pensionary liabilities of Government employees absorbed in MTNL and who opted for combined service pension on parity with similar employees in BSNL.
- (ii) Waiver of Government loan to BSNL involving an amount of Rs. 1411 crores.
- (iii) Financial support of Rs.6724.51 crores to BSNL and Rs.4533.97 crores to MTNL on surrender of BWA spectrum.

Besides these measures, Government is formulating a coordinated plan aimed towards revival of BSNL and MTNL by addressing issues of high employee expenses and gainful utilization of assets to enhance availability of finances for network expansion and improvement in Quality of Service (QoS).

BSNL and MTNL are also separately preparing a revival plan for increasing revenue potential, identifying business opportunities, and for organizational restructuring to enable them to grow into customer-centric companies with expertise in marketing and customer services delivery and to develop a human resources strategy in line with the restructured organizational vision.

Assessment of decision on sugar sector

†426. SHRIMATI KANAK LATA SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) the decisions taken by Government regarding sugarcane and sugar mills, and whether Government is aware of their far-reaching consequences;
- (b) whether the decision of Government is causing neglect to the interests of sugar-cane growers; and
- (c) whether any assessment has been made to see that who are going to be benefited by this decision of Government — farmers, consumers or the industrialists of sugar industry and if so, the details thereof ?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI RAOSAHEB DADARAO DANVE):

(a) An Informal Group of Union Ministers has deliberated about the prevailing situation regarding cane price arrears and related issues and has made its recommendations relating to Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP), Production and Export of Raw Sugar, Import Duty on Sugar and Excise Duty Loan to sugar mills.

(b) and (c) The said recommendations seek to provide benefit to all the stakeholders in the sugar sector by improving the financial health of the sugar mills so as to enable them to clear the cane price arrears of the farmers.

Price-hike of sugar and other essential commodities

†427. SHRIMATI KANAK LATA SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether prices of sugar and several essential commodities have risen drastically in the country due to impractical policies of the current Government and consequently the common man has to directly face the price-hike;

(b) the inflation rate of sugar and different essential commodities during the last three years;

(c) the measures taken by Government to check the price-rise and whether these measures are proving effective; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI RAOSAHEB DADARAO DANVE):

(a) The prices of sugar in the domestic market are currently stable. The recent rise in prices of other essential food commodities are mainly due to factors such as anticipation of deficient rains with possible shortfall in production, transportation cost, supply constraints like storage facilities for fruits and vegetables and artificial shortages created through hoarding and black marketing.

(b) The inflation rate of sugar and different essential commodities during last three years are given in Statement-I (*See below*).

(c) and (d) The measures taken by the Government to control prices of essential commodities are given in Statement-II (*See below*).

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.