

### Opening of new Post Offices in rural areas

90. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) how many new post offices have been opened in rural areas during 1977, 1978 and 1979 (year-wise);

(b) whether Government have any proposal under consideration to provide additional postal facilities in rural areas by opening new post offices as near as possible to the villages, and

(c) if so, how many such post offices are proposed to be opened during 1980 and 1981 respectively?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI C. M. STEPHEN):

(a) The practice in the P & T Department is to compile statistics according to the financial years. The number of post offices opened in the last three years is as follows:—

Years	No. of post offices opened
(1) 1977-78	3,297
(2) 1978-79	5,753
(3) 1979-80	5,663

(b) Rural post offices are opened with reference to prescribed norms in a phased manner according to the targets fixed in the successive Five Year/Annual Plans. Wherever a post office is sanctioned taking into account the combined population of a group of villages, care is taken to see that a central village is selected, for locating the post office.

(c) It is proposed to open about 5,000 post offices in rural areas during 1980-81. This is subject to modification in the light of the revised Five Year Plan, 1980-85 as may be finally approved by the Planning Commission. The number of post offices proposed to be opened in 1981-82 will be known when the revised Five Year Plan 1980-85 is finalised.

### Price of Sugar during last three years

91. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state the month-end prices of sugar in important markets of the country during the last three years, upto and including May, 1980?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): A statement giving the required information is laid on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library See No. LT-827/80] (During this period, sugar was under decontrol from 16-8-1978 to 16-12-1979. The prices shown relate to free-sale sugar during the period of control, and for the entire sales during the period of decontrol).

### Drought in Gujarat

92. SHRI AMARSINH V. RATHAWA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that certain parts of Gujarat State are also facing drought and famine;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the help rendered to these areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) and (b). Fourteen districts of Gujarat have been affected by drought conditions of varying degrees, of which 3 districts of Panchmahals, Banaskantha and Sabarkantha have been the worst affected. The total cropped area affected by drought, according to the State Government, is about 11.24 lakh ha.

(c) The State Government has been providing relief to the drought affected areas by organising relief works as well as works under the Food for Work Programme subsidising the distribution of fodder, arranging transportation of water, deepening of existing wells, sinking new wells, re-orienting agricultural strategy through soil conservation,