

(b) whether Government propose to reduce or subsidise fertiliser prices up to fifty per cent in order to offer an incentive to the farmers to increase food-production at this crucial juncture; and

(c) if so, when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE): (a) to (c). Fertiliser use is economical even at existing fertiliser prices, particularly for exotic and hybrid varieties of crops, which give a higher output per acre. Farmers find it profitable to use fertilisers even at existing prices in view of the general rise in the price level of agricultural commodities and the increased procurement prices for foodgrains. The demand for fertilisers still exceeds the available supplies and available fertilisers are fully utilised by the farmers. Prices do not seem to be acting as a disincentive for increased fertiliser use. Therefore, there is no proposal to reduce fertiliser prices or to increase subsidies on fertilisers. Subsidies are, at present, given only on Muriate-of Potash and Ground Rock-phosphate. However, in the Union Territories of Manipur, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Laccadive and Minicoy group of Islands, which are comparatively backward areas, subsidies are being given on fertilisers in general at the rates indicated below:—

Rates of subsidy in 1967-68

Area	Nitrogenous Fertilisers	Phosphatic fertilisers
Manipur, Tripura and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.	20% of retail price.	40% of retail price.
Laccadive and Minicoy Islands.	25% of retail price.	50% of retail price.

Other subsidies on fertilisers were discontinued with effect from the 1st April, 1967, taking into account the high cost of subsidies.

CASHEW PLANTATIONS

355. SHRI S. K. SAMBANDHAN: Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to increase cashew plantations; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE): (a) Yes.

(b) A target of 6.00 lakh additional acres has been fixed for the Fourth Five Year Plan. The new cashew plantations are to be raised in selected areas, both forest and non-forest, in the States of Kerala, Mysore, Madras, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Orissa and West Bengal. Suitable incentives in the shape of long term loans are offered and a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for raising air layers from high yielding trees has been sanctioned in the States of Kerala, Mysore and Goa.

POST OFFICES, SAVING BANKS, TELEGRAPH OFFICES AND TELEPHONE EXCHANGES IN VILLAGES

356. SHRI G. C. DIXIT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to increase the number of Post Offices, Saving Banks, Telegraph Offices and Telephone Exchanges not only in towns and cities but also in villages during the Fourth Plan period;

(b) whether Government also propose to set up over 500 Post Offices in Maharashtra during the Fourth Plan period; and

(c) the number of Post Offices, Saving Banks, Telegraph Offices and Telephone Exchanges likely to be increased in Madhya Pradesh as well as in villages during the Fourth Plan Period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.