

Bask Telephone Service Operators" was received from Director General of Audit, Post and Telecommunications. On the subject, a news item titled "Telecom migration package comes under audit fire" appeared in "Times of India" dated 5.2.2000 (no such news item appeared in the Hindustan Times of 5th February, 2000).

(b) and (c) The Government have not accepted the observations made in the Draft Audit Para. A reply was sent to Audit indicating the Government's view, *inter-alia* that migration of the existing licensees to the New Telecom Policy-1999 (NTP-99) regime of revenue sharing arrangement was result of informed and institutionalised decision in best public interest making pragmatic adjustments warranted by ground realities in relation to the Telecom Industry.

Pending application for PCO/STD/ISD in Arunachal Pradesh

481. SHRI NABAM REBIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of PCO/STD/ISD in the Arunachal Pradesh functioning at present;
- (b) the number of applications pending for grant of PCO/STD/ ISD booths in the State during the last two years;
- (c) the reasons for not sanctioning the above applications; and
- (d) the effective measures being taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) A total of 413 PCOs are functioning in Arunachal Pradesh at present.

(b) While no application for allotment of PCOs was pending during the year 1998-99, only 128 applications are pending during the year 1999-2000.

(c) The applications are pending due to insufficient STD junctions, incomplete applications etc.

(d) The steps taken to clear the waiting list of applications include

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augmenting the STD junctions, increase in the exchange capacity, expansion of outdoor network etc.

Regularisation of Extra-Departmental Postal Employees

482. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:
SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government have any proposal for regularising the services of extra-departmental postal employees on the Central Government rolls;
- (b) if so, the number of employees likely to be benefited; and
- (c) by when a final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) As on 31.03.99 there are 309915 extra-departmental agents in the Department of Posts. Improving the terms & conditions of employment of Extra-departmental agents including the prospects of eligible extra-departmental agents for absorption against regular vacancies is a continuing exercise. Existing rules of recruitment for Postmen, Postal Assistant/Sorting Assistant and Group 'D' cadre already provide for preference to eligible extra-departmental agents for recruitment against departmental posts.

(b) and (c) in view of reply to (a) above, do not arise!

Financial Assistance to Bharti Telecom

483. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government are aware of the report captioned "IDFC gives Bharti Rs. 20 crore to buy telecom companies" published in Business Standard on February 1, 2000;
- (b) whether it is a fact that Bharti televenture, a joint venture of Bharti Telecom and British Telecom is on a buying spree of so-called sick cellular telecom companies who were sought to have been failed out by Government through its migration package;