

(b) whether all aspects of National Security are being considered while taking a decision in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details of the safeguards on national security being considered therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) National Telecom Policy '99 envisages the review of opening up of International telephony service to competition by the year 2004.

(b) and (c) Does not arise at present in view of (a) above.

Long distance Telephony to Private Parties

195. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to open long distance telephony to private parties;

(b) if so, by when such plan will be disclosed;

(c) how many parties will be permitted to enter the business, apart from VSNL;

(d) whether long distance telephony by opened to foreign investors; and

(e) if so, the percentage of equity that will be permitted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes sir,

(b) By 15th August 2000

(c) The competition is proposed to be open with restriction on the number of players.

(d) yes Sir, In collaboration with Indian companies.

(e) Government proposes to keep foreign equity cap of 49%.