

(e) if so, the details thereof along with the details of expenditure likely to be incurred thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government has approved creation of National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) for providing broadband connectivity of all Panchayats. The plan is to extend the existing optical fibre network initially upto Panchayats by utilizing the Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) and creating an institutional mechanism for management and operation of the NOFN for ensuring non discriminatory access to all service providers.

(d) and (e) National Informatics Centre (NIC) has been assigned a project by DoT/USOF for carrying out the Geo Information System (GIS) mapping of the existing OFC Network of the various Telecom Operators such as BSNL, Rail Tel, Power Grid, etc. and the work is in progress. The mapping of the existing OFC will enable to calculate the incremental length of the cable required for connecting all the 2.5 Lakh Panchayats with OFC.

The cost of initial phase of the NOFN Scheme is likely to be in the region of Rs. 20,000 crores.

Free roaming service for mobile subscribers

†1308. SHRI ISHWARLAL SHANKARLAL JAIN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to provide free roaming service to all mobile subscribers in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government has consulted telecom companies in this regard and the views of mobile companies to provide this facility upon taking due initiative?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA): (a) to (c) The National Telecom Policy-2011 (NTP-2011) is under formulation. However, the Draft NTP-2011 has been announced by Minister of Communications & IT on 10th October 2011 and has been put in public domain for wider consultation. The last date for receiving suggestions/comments is 9th December 2011.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Provisions in the Draft NTP-2011 include:

- i. Achieve One Nation - Full Mobile Number Portability and work towards One Nation - Free Roaming.
- ii. To review roaming charges with the ultimate objective of removing the roaming charge across the nation.

Service options sought from ITS officers

†1309. SHRI JAI PRAKASH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that on the basis of demands by the officers of Indian Telecom Service (ITS) Government has recently asked for the service options from those officers, who are holding higher positions for years in the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) and the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL);

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the number of such officers, who have given such options?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA): (a) to (c) Consequent upon formation of MTNL and BSNL, Group 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' employees of the Department of Telecommunications were transferred to these PSUs on 'as is where is' basis on deemed deputation. As per rule 37-A of CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972 notified by Government of India, Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare, these officers are to be allowed an option to revert back to the Government or to seek permanent absorption in BSNL/MTNL. About 3,97,000 Group B, C & D employees already stand absorbed in BSNL/MTNL.

Four option letters dated 22nd September, 2011 were issued by the Department of Telecommunications calling for option from Group 'A' officers of Indian Telecom Service (ITS)/ Telegraph Traffic Service (TTS)/ Telecom Factories Service (TFS), General Central Service (GCS), Indian P&T Accounts & Finance Service (IP&T AFS) and P&T Building Works Service (P&T BWS) for exercising option for absorption in BSNL/MTNL or to continue in Government service. Last

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