

sharing of knowledge resources among the large participating institutions seamlessly across the nation and globally. It is to bridge the existing knowledge gap in the country. It would help the country evolve as a Knowledge Society and spur economic activities in the knowledge domain.

A separate network is planned to take optical fiber based connectivity to Gram Panchayats of the country by the Department of Telecommunications. The Estimated cost of the project is Rs. 20,000 crores.

NKN has already extended the connectivity to IITs, IIMs, ISRO, DRDO, CSIR, ICMR, ICAR, DAE, Medical, NITs, NIFTs, State and Central universities. Till date, 681 institutions have been connected through NKN.

VRS for employees of BSNL

1923. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that BSNL is going to shelve one third of its present manpower through Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) route; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA) : (a) and (b) A proposal from BSNL has been received in the Department of Telecommunications regarding a Voluntary Retirement Scheme aiming to reduce the work force by around one lakh.

Opening of new post offices

1924. SHRI KANWAR DEEP SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has received proposals from various State Governments to open new post offices;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and location-wise; and
- (c) the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SACHIN PILOT) : (a) and (b) A proposal for opening of Post Offices has been received from Chhattisgarh Government during the current financial year for opening of 1927 new rural branches of post offices at 1927 Gram Panchayat Headquarters.

- (c) Department of Posts has included it in its 12th Plan Proposal and has presented it to the Planning Commission.