

**Increase in mobile call tariffs**

\*6. SHRI JAIPRAKASH NARAYAN SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular have increased effective tariffs on Special Value Vouchers between 8 and 25 per cent;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons for such an increase;

(c) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has approved the increase in tariffs by these companies; and

(d) if not, the action taken against these companies for arbitrarily increasing tariffs of calls?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) All mobile service providers including Airtel and Idea have made a number of changes in Special Value Vouchers/Special Tariff Vouchers (STVs) in the recent past. The changes made in STVs involve increase or decrease in one or more tariff components like local/STD/ISD call rates, free minutes, SMS, data, value added services, validity, etc. As STVs have various components having different values for different consumers, it is not possible to quantify the effective change of tariff in STVs.

Mobile tariff is presently under regulatory forbearance except for National Roaming Services. The service providers have the flexibility to offer different tariff products (including STVs) depending on market conditions and other commercial considerations. Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular have *inter-alia* cited increased costs as reason for these changes in STVs.

(c) As per the extant guidelines of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), any change in tariff by the telecom service providers does not need prior approval of TRAI. The service providers are only required to report all tariff changes to TRAI within 7 days after implementation for information and record of TRAI after conducting a self check to ensure that the tariff plans are consistent with the regulatory principles in all respects.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.