...*(Interruptions)*... Please, ...*(Interruptions)*... How can you say that? ...*(Interruptions)*... Please listen to him. ...*(Interruptions)*... You can't do that.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM): Sir, the special category status has been demanded by various ...*(Interruptions)*... In respect of Seemaandhra special package has been given at the behest of Mr. Rahul Gandhi, Vice-President of the Congress Party. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned till 1200 hours.

The House then adjourned at twenty-one minutes past eleven of the clock.

The House reassembled at twelve of the clock, MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Roaming charges

*401. SHRI BHARATSINH PRABHATSINH PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the roaming charges for mobile subscribers in the country, at present;

(b) whether Government proposes to abolish roaming charges for mobile subscribers from 2013, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government would direct the operators not to increase STD tariffs so that consumers get the benefit of roaming charges?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) As per the provision of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997 as amended from time to time, TRAI prescribes tariffs for telecommunication services in India. Taking into consideration the declared intent of the New Telecom Policy-2012 for roaming charges, after a comprehensive consultation process, TRAI issued 55th Amendment to Telecom Tariff Order (TTO) 1999 on 17.06.2013, which came into effect from 01.07.2013. The details of specified ceiling tariff for national roaming in the country at present are indicated as below:—

Item	Ceiling tariff as per 55th Amendment to TTO, 1999
Charge for outgoing local voice call	Ceiling of Re. 1.00 per minute
Charge for outgoing long distance (inter-circle) voice call	Ceiling of Rs. 1.50 per minute
Charge for incoming voice call	Ceiling of Re. 0.75 per minute
Charge for outgoing local SMS	Ceiling of Re 1.00 per SMS
Charge for outgoing long distance (inter-circle) SMS	Ceiling of Rs. 1.50 per SMS

(b) One of the objectives of National Telecom Policy 2012 is to work towards One Nation-Free Roaming. Through 55th Amendment to TTO, 1999, TRAI has reduced the ceiling tariffs for national roaming service, permitted Special Tariff Vouchers (STVs) and Combo Vouchers for roaming tariffs to provide flexibility and convenience to the consumers. This amendment also mandated the wireless access service providers to offer special Roaming Tariff Plans and Roaming Tariff Plans Free (RTP and RTP-FR) in which the subscribers can avail partially free roaming, or fully free roaming in lieu of payment of fixed charges, by subscribing to RTP and RTP-FR respectively.

MTNL has introduced free incoming facility while roaming in MTNL network in licence area of Delhi and Mumbai for MTNL customers *w.e.f.* 26.01.2014. BSNL has nation *vide* free roaming facility to its customers with nominal charge or Re. 1/- per day. This feature is offered as a Special Tariff Vouchers costing Rs. 90/- with unlimited incoming calls free in roaming and outgoing local and national calls @ 1.5 paise per second while roaming with validity of 90 days.

(c) The power to notify the rates at which telecommunications services are to be provided by various telecom service providers in the country has been vested with Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) under TRAI Act of 1997. As per the current tariff framework in vogue, tariff for mobile services (including STD tariff) is under forbearance except for national roaming services. The operators have flexibility to offer different tariff packages targeted at different customer user groups, subject to the condition that these tariffs have to be consistent with the regulatory principles of non-discrimination, non-predation etc.