

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997 as amended from time to time, TRAI prescribes tariffs for telecommunication services in India. As per the current tariff framework in vogue, tariff for access service (including STD tariff) is under forbearance except rural wire line services and national roaming services. The telecom service providers 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.

(b) to (f) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Digitalisation of rural post offices

3284. SHRI A.U. SINGH DEO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is taking steps for digitalisation of rural post offices in the country;
- (b) the physical progress in digitalisation of rural post offices in Odisha;
- (c) whether any target was earmarked, both physical and financial, for 2011-12, concerned with digitalisation of rural post offices;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has approved the Department of Posts' IT Modernization Project with a total outlay of ₹4909 crore in November, 2012. The IT Modernization Project aims at modernization and computerization of all post offices in the country including more than 130000 Gramin Dak Sewak Post Offices in rural areas. The project covers whole of India including Odisha.

(c) to (e) No specific target for the year 2011-12 was earmarked for the digitalization of rural post offices. The IT Modernization Project is being implemented through eight different segments and out of the eight, two segments *i.e.* Rural ICT- Application and Rural Hardware and Connectivity deal with digitalization of rural post offices.

In respect of Rural ICT- Application, the contract has been signed on 28.02.13 but the implementation is kept on hold to align with the finalization of Rural Hardware

and Connectivity contract which is under finalization. For Rural ICT Hardware and Connectivity, earlier two tenders were annulled. Fresh tender was issued on 4.2.2014 and evaluation of bids is in progress.

Rural broadband connections

3285. SHRI A.U. SINGH DEO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is achieving its target for rural broadband connections in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the further steps proposed to be taken to promote rural broadband connections, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (c) Government has not fixed any target separately for Rural Broadband connection in the country. National Telecom Policy 2012 specifies a target of 175 million broadband connections by 2017 and 600 million broadband connections by 2020.

(d) Government has approved the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) scheme. NOFN is planned to connect all the Gram Panchayats (approximately 2,50,000) in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Railtel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) by laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity.

Non-payment of interconnect usage charges to BSNL

3286. DR. V. MAITREYAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken any action against private telecom operators such as Bharati Airtel, Idea, Vodafone and others for their non-payment of interconnect usage charges to BSNL;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for non-payment by these private telecom players; and