

(d) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) The committee has recommended similar regulatory treatment of communication services of Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Over The Top (OTT) communication services in case of domestic calls (local and national) in view of pricing and regulatory arbitrage. It has also recommended for adoption of liberal approach for OTT Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) international calling services and no regulatory oversight for OTT application services, as applicable to conventional communication services.

(b) to (d) Based on Telecom Service Provider (TSP) data provided to the committee during consultations, Committee has observed in its report pricing arbitrage of six times between conventional voice communications and VoIP offered by OTT. The recommendation is intended to, *inter-alia*, deal with pricing and regulatory arbitrage.

However, Government has not yet taken any considered view on the recommendations of the committee.

#### **Decline in the number of landline connections**

†2150. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of landline telephone connections is declining continuously since the last few years, if so, the reasons therefor; and

(b) whether Government is contemplating to take steps afresh to promote and publicise landline connections under the Digital India Programme, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) The details of landline subscribers of all telecom service providers during the last three years and current year (as on 30.06.2015) as maintained by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), are given below:

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Year	Number of landline connections (in million)
31.12.2012	30.79
31.12.2013	28.89
31.12.2014	27.00
30.06.2015	26.15

Main reasons for decline in subscriber base of landline telephone connections are given below:

- There is a general decline in the landline telephone connections as there is a tendency to shift to mobile services because of its convenience with regard to its utility and availability all times.
- High capital/maintenance cost in provision of landline services in comparison to mobile services.
- Comparative higher cost of availing landline services by customers.
- Frequent interruption in landline services affecting quality of services due to cable damage by various agencies working for road widening works, water and drainage activities by the local bodies.

(b) Following measures have been taken to promote and publicise landline connections:

- TRAI has prescribed Fixed Termination Charges (FTC) and Mobile Termination Charges (MTC) for wireline to wireless calls as zero through Telecommunication Interconnection Usage Charges (Eleventh Amendment) Regulations, 2015 to promote usage of landline network.
- Recently BSNL and MTNL have launched separate schemes for free calling tariff plan in night hours from landline to any network for promotion of landline connections.
- Migration to Next Generation Network (NGN) technology exchanges to provide better quality of services to customers.
- Retention of non-payment disconnected numbers by giving installment payment options and pursuing the case on individual basis.
- Annual Maintenance Contract is done with the supplier/original equipment manufacturers for maintenance of equipment in good working condition.

Prompt restoration of services to achieve the quality of service parameters prescribed by TRAI.

**Investment by private sector in Digital India programme**

†2151. SHRI HARIVANSH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that private sector has given an investment assurance of 4.72 lakhs crore during the launch of Digital India week, if so, by when these investment proposals would materialise;
- (b) number of youth likely to be employed under this programme; and
- (c) the scheme of Government to increase export in the field of telecommunication and the manner in which India could become a leading country in the field of hardware.

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) During the Digital India Week Launch, investment assurances of above ₹ 4.5 lakh crores were given by some of the major industrial houses. These investments are expected to generate over 18 lakh jobs.

(c) (I) The Government has taken the following steps to increase the exports in telecom sector:

The Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC) has been set up by the Government to promote export of Telecom Equipments and Services. The Council undertakes activities aimed at export promotion such as commissioning of studies to find potential markets, holding of national/international seminars and facilitating participation of exporters in various overseas exhibitions.

(II) The following initiatives are being taken by Government to promote electronics manufacturing (including telecom products) in the country:

- (i) Promotion of electronics hardware manufacturing is one of the pillars of Digital India campaign of the Government.
- (ii) Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS) provides financial incentives to offset disability and attract investments in the sector.

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