

of places identified where the said system is likely to be introduced first;

(d) whether private companies have been allowed to set gateways under the Government authority in this field;

(e) whether VSNL is likely to lose its revenue on account of the said decision;

(f) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken or proposed to be taken to compensate VSNL for loss; and

(g) the precautions taken by the Government in regard to security considerations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. One specific proposal i.e. from M/s. Iridium India Telecom Limited (IITL) for operation of Global Mobile Personal Communication by Satellite (GMPCS) Service has been cleared by the Government and a provisional licence agreement for operation of the service was signed with the company on 28.10.98.

(c) It is a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) System, providing global coverage. The system provides for a unique number for the subscriber and Global mobility in other countries where it has been authorised for operation. M/s. IITL is yet to market its services in India. The details in this regard are not available with the Government.

(d) Yes, Sir. The Government after considering all aspects has stipulated that Gateways (Earth Stations) for all licensed systems would be located in India and their operation and maintenance would be with an authority/organisation designated by the Government.

(e) and (f) It will be possible that certain calls in the CGMPS service will be established bypassing the International Gateway Switch of VSNL. However, the licence agreement provides that VSNL will be compensated when the International Gateway is bypassed.

(g) Specific proposals for GMPCS licence are cleared from the security angle by a High Level Inter-ministerial Committee consisting of Secretaries of Department of Telecom, Department of Space and the Secretaries of the Departments/Organisations dealing with security related issues.

#### **Extraction of Sea Minerals**

505. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to invite participation of the private sector in the programme for development of technology for extraction of minerals from ocean;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN): (a) As of now, there is no proposal for inviting the participation of private sector, in the development of technology for extraction of mineral resources from the ocean.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

[English]

#### **Extension of Operational Jurisdiction of MTNL**

506. SHRI K.P. MOHAN:

SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY:

SHRI T.R. BAALU:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to hand over the Chennai and Greater Chennai Telephones from the control of the Department of Telecommunications in Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the parameters being adopted for transferring such telephones to M.T.N.L.;

(d) whether the Government have any proposal to install a separate exchange for the use of internet consumers at Chennai; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Government has not taken any decision.

(b) and (c) In view of (a) above, the question does not arise.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) As a part of National Internet Backbone, it is proposed to set up internet node at Chennai also.

#### **Cultivation of Rice**

507. SHRIMATI RANEE NARAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Assam has approached the Union Government for providing help for cultivation of rapid growing summer rice; and

(b) if so, the decision taken by the Union Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) There is no specific proposal of the Government of Assam under the on-going Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Intensive Cereals Development Programme—Rice for assistance on cultivation of summer rice. However, Agriculture Production Commi-