

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
COMMUNICATIONS  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:255  
ANSWERED ON:13.03.2000  
NATIONAL LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE SERVICE  
P.D. ELANGOVAR;VILAS BABURAO MUTTEMWAR

**Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned ` DoT will face real competition once national long distance phone service are opened up` appearing in the Hindustan Times, dated January 5, 2000;
- (b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein and the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Government have taken remedial steps in this regard;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether a special group on Information Technology Convergence set up under the Group of Telecom has submitted its report;
- (f) if so, whether it has recommended some steps in this connection; and (g) if so, the details of the report and the steps suggested by the Group? . . . . .

**Answer**

MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN)

(a) to (g) : A statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) to (g) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 255 FOR 13TH MARCH, REGARDING NATIONAL LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE SERVICE

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d)

The news item relates to opening of the national long distance telephony to private competition, establishment of a Group on Telecom and IT Convergence and the need for changes in the TRAI Act, etc.

The factual position is that in pursuance of the objectives of New Telecom Policy 1999 to accelerate development of world class telecom infrastructure in the country, the Government has decided to open the national long distance telephony to private competition; the recommendations of TRAI are under Government's active consideration. There is no question of any fierce fighting between DoT and private operators; the Government on other hand is keen to introduce competition in this area to augment services and improve quality.

(e) to (g)

The Government is also committed to provide an effective regulatory framework with comprehensive powers and clear authority to perform its functions; there is no battle for supremacy as mentioned in the news item. Keeping in view the need for urgent resolution of subsisting problems in the telecom sector and to expeditiously implement the New Telecom Policy 1999 while taking into account the increasing convergence between telecom and Information Technology, the Government constituted a Group on Telecom and IT Convergence under the Chairmanship of Finance Minister on 13th December, 1999. One of the terms of reference of the Group was to consider and make recommendations to strengthen the TRAI through suitable legislative amendments.

This Group constituted a Sub-Group under the Chairmanship of Shri Arun Jaitley, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, to consider and make recommendations in this regard to the main Group. The report of the Sub-Group was considered by the Group on Telecom and IT Convergence, based on which Government decided to bring about immediate amendments to the TRAI Act, 1997. Accordingly, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Ordinance 2000 was promulgated on 24 the January 2000, bringing out certain structural changes in the TRAI Act, 1997, with the objectives of strengthening the regulator and giving it wider powers, and also removing the conceptual incongruity in combining both the recommendatory and adjudicatory functions in the same authority. The ordinance, inter alia, also provides for the establishment of a separate disputes redressal body, known as the Telecom Disputes settlement and Appellate Tribunal with wider adjudicatory powers than those earlier available to TRAI. The amendments in the TRAI Act made through the above ordinance have been welcomed by various industrial chambers and associations such as CII, FICII and COAI