

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:97
ANSWERED ON:11.12.2013
FREE NATIONAL ROAMING
Bauri Smt. Susmita;Putul Kumari Smt.

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has approved 'One Nation' Free Roaming' facility for the mobile subscribers in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the various telecom service providers thereon;
- (c) whether the Public Sector Undertaking telecom companies propose to provide free roaming facility and if so, the details thereof and the number of subscribers of BSNL and MTNL at present;
- (d) whether the number of subscribers of the said companies have stabilised/not registered any increase during the last six months; and
- (e) if so, the reasons therefor and the steps taken by the Government to increase the customer base of such companies?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 97 FOR 11TH DECEMBER, 2013 REGARDING "FREE NATIONAL ROAMING" One of the objectives of the New Telecom Policy – 2012 is to work towards 'one nation – free roaming'.

As per the provisions 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, TRAI undertook a comprehensive consultation process to prescribe roaming charges. As a result of 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. This amendment brought about the following changes in the tariff regime for national roaming service:

(i) The ceiling tariffs prescribed by TRAI in the year 2007 were Rs.1.40 per minute for outgoing local calls and Rs.2.40 per minute for outgoing STD calls while on national roaming. These ceilings have been reduced to Re. 1.00 per minute and Rs. 1.50 per minute respectively. Similarly, the ceiling tariffs for incoming calls while on national roaming have been reduced from Rs.1.75 per minute to Re. 0.75 per minute. Tariffs for outgoing SMS while on national roaming, which were earlier under forbearance have now been capped: outgoing SMS-local at Re. 1.00 per SMS and outgoing SMS-STD at Rs. 1.50 per SMS. Incoming SMS will remain free of charge.

(ii) Special Tariff Vouchers(STVs) and Combo Vouchers with the benefits of national roaming have been allowed to provide flexibility and convenience to the customers.

(iii) The service providers have been mandated to offer special tariff plans for roaming. The subscribers can avail partially free roaming, or fully free roaming in lieu of payment of fixed charges, by subscribing to the corresponding tariff plan.

All the wireless access service providers including BSNL and MTNL have implemented the tariff for national roaming in accordance with the reduced ceilings prescribed through the 55th Amendment to Telecom Tariff Order (TTO), 1999. All the service providers have launched special tariff plans for roaming. Some of the service providers have launched special tariff vouchers and combo vouchers for national roaming.

While the reduced ceiling tariffs for national roaming service would benefit all the users, special tariff vouchers and combo vouchers would be beneficial for infrequent roamers. On the other hand, special tariff plans would benefit the frequent roamers.

As on 30th September 2013, the number of subscribers of BSNL were 11,72,26,622 and of MTNL were 72,83,953.

The Wireless subscribers of the said companies have declined during the last six months due to variety of reasons such as deletion of dormant subscribers and general condition of telecom industry. However, there is a continuous effort for the betterment of services and optimization of the network for its improved performance, launch of new tariff plans, promotional offers and the introduction of new

value added services by the said companies to attract the subscribers.