

**Reduction of Tariffs on Internet
Connections by VSNL**

1863. SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal is under consideration of the Government for reduction of the tariffs charged by the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited for giving Internet connections;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any steps have been taken to make internet services popular amongst its users; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The proposal envisages to introduce commitment discounts for existing internet subscribers of VSNL to the extent of 20% for the first renewal and 30% for second and subsequent renewal.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) VSNL has taken a number of steps to improve the service:

— It has started single number dial-up for internet in major metros. Internet Access has been made easy by introducing State-of-the-art Remote Access Service, based on Digital Modem Chip.

— It is augmenting its International Bandwidth on pro-active basis.

— It has started its shorter e-mail addresses facility in the format username @ vsn.com.

— It has started free web page hosting services for its internet customers.

— It has also launched its start-up-kit with which the user gets many free softwares.

— It has launched its portal site, which serves as the gateway for Internet for its users.

[Translation]

Rural Electrification in Bihar

1864. SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether 39 schemes for rural relectrification in Bihar involving Rs. 40 crore were sanctioned during 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government propose to release the sanctioned loan for rural electrification in Bihar; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF POWER, MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. 39 Schemes sanctioned under Rural Electrification Programme provide for coverage of electrification for 1089 new villages, energisation of 5872 pumpsets in Bihar besides release of non-agricultural services under various categories.

(c) and (d) The resumption of loaning facilities by Rural Electrification Corporation against these 39 schemes will depend upon resolution of outstanding issues including mutually acceptable repayment schedule, execution of loan documents, in accordance with Rural Electrification Corporation's prescribed norms etc.

[English]

Power Tariff in Eastern Region

1865. DR. ULHAS VASUDEO PATIL: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the formula evolved by his Ministry for fixation of power tariff by different regions;