

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4011
ANSWERED ON:17.05.2006
FOREIGN FIRMS IN TELECOM SECTOR
Nikhil Kumar Shri

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

- (a) whether the Union Government has decided to dispense with telecoms regulations with a view to create a climate for small and medium entrepreneurs to step into technology manufacture in the telecom sector;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to allow foreign telecommunication giants to enter into the field of telecommunication; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) & (b) As per the existing policy, no industrial license or specific permission is required for manufacturing of telecom equipments. Small and Medium entrepreneurs are free to set up telecom equipments manufacturing units in this sector.

(c) & (d) The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in various sub sectors of telecom sector is allowed as per details given in the Annexure. Annexure

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) DETAILS IN VARIOUS SUB SECTORS OF TELECOM SECTOR

1. In manufacturing sector 100% FDI is permitted under automatic route.

2. FDI upto 100% permitted in respect of the following telecom services:

(i) ISPs not providing gateways (both for satellite and submarine cables)

(ii) Infrastructure Providers providing dark fibre (IP Category I)

(iii) Electronic Mail; and

(iv) Voice Mail

The above would be subject to the following conditions:

(a) FDI upto 100% is allowed subject to the conditions that such companies would divest 26% of their equity in favour of Indian public in 5 years, if these companies are listed in other parts of the world.

(b) The above services would be subject to licensing and security requirements, wherever required.

(c) Proposals for FDI beyond 49% shall be considered by FIPB on case to case basis.

3. Foreign direct investment upto 74% permitted, subject to licensing and security requirements for the following:

i) Internet Service (with gateways)

ii) Infrastructure Providers (Category-II)

iii) Radio Paging Service.

4. Foreign Direct Investment upto 74% is permitted for the following as per the conditions of Press Note 5 (2005 Series) {copy enclosed as appendix}

- (i) International Long Distance
- (ii) National Long Distance Service
- (iii) Basic Telephone Service
- (iv) Cellular Mobile Service
- (v) Global Mobile Personal Communication
- (vi) Other Value Added Services.

ANNEXURE

Government of India
Ministry of Commerce & Industry
Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion
Secretariat for Industrial Assistance
PRESS NOTE NO. 5 (2005 SERIES)

Subject: Enhancement of the Foreign Direct Investment ceiling from 49 per cent to 74 per cent in the Telecom sector.

1. In pursuance of the Government's commitment to liberalise the FDI regime, it has been decided to enhance the Foreign Direct Investment ceiling from 49 per cent to 74 per cent in certain telecom services [such as Basic, Cellular, Unified Access Services, National/International Long Distance, V-Sat, Public Mobile Radio Trunked Services (PMRTS), Global Mobile Personal Communications Services (GMPCS) and other value added services], subject to the following conditions:-

A. The total composite foreign holding including but not limited to investments by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs), Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds (FCCBs), American Depository Receipts (ADRs), Global Depository Receipts (GDRs), convertible preference shares, proportionate foreign investment in Indian promoters/investment companies including their holding companies, etc., herein after referred as FDI, will not exceed 74 per cent. Thus, 74 per cent foreign investment can be made directly or indirectly in the operating company or through a holding company. Hence, the remaining 26 per cent will be owned by resident Indian citizens or an Indian Company (i.e. foreign direct investment does not exceed 49 percent and the management is with the Indian owners). It is clarified that proportionate foreign component of such an Indian Company will also be counted towards the ceiling of 74%. However, foreign component in the total holding of Indian public sector banks and Indian public sector financial institutions will be treated as 'Indian' holding. The licensee will be required to disclose the status of such foreign holding and certify that the foreign investment is within the ceiling of 74% on a half yearly basis.

B. The majority Directors on the Board including Chairman, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) shall be resident Indian citizens, enforced through licence agreement. The appointment to these positions from among resident Indian citizens shall be made in consultation with serious Indian investors. Serious investor has been defined below in para G (ii).

C. The share Holder Agreements (SHA) shall specifically incorporate the condition that majority directors on the Board including Chairman, Managing Director and CEO shall be resident Indian citizens and shall also envisage the conditions of adherence to Licence Agreement.

(D) FDI upto 49 per cent will continue to be on automatic route. Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) approval shall be required for FDI in the licensee company/Indian promoters/investment companies including their holding companies if it has a bearing on the overall ceiling of 74 per cent. While approving the investment proposals, FIPB shall take note that investment is not coming from unfriendly countries.

(E) The investment approval by FIPB shall envisage the conditionality that Company would adhere to licence Agreement.

(F) FDI shall be subject to laws of India and not the laws of the foreign country/countries.

(G) Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will enforce the above and the conditions mentioned below through appropriate amendment in licence:-

(i) There shall be a non-obstante clause in the licence which confers powers upon the licensor to cancel the licence under certain defined circumstances.

(ii) In order to ensure that at least one serious resident Indian promoter subscribes reasonable amount of the resident Indian shareholding, such resident Indian promoter shall hold at least 10 per cent equity of the licensee company.

(iii) The Company shall acknowledge compliance with the licence agreement as a part of Memorandum of Association of the Company. Any violation of the licence agreement shall automatically lead to the company being unable to carry on its business in this regard. The duty to comply with the licence agreement shall also be made a part of Articles of Association.

(iv) Chief Technical Officer (CTO) Chief Finance Officer (CFO) shall be resident Indian Citizens. The Licensor/DoT shall also be

empowered to notify key positions to be held by resident Indian citizens.

(v) The Company shall not transfer the following to any person/ place outside India:-

(a) any accounting information relating to subscriber (except for roaming/billing) (Note: it does not restrict a statutorily required disclosure of financial nature);

(b) user information (except pertaining to foreign subscribers using Indian Operator's network while roaming) and

(c) details of their infrastructure/network diagram except to telecom equipment suppliers/manufacturers who undertake the installation, commissioning etc. of the infrastructure of the licensee company on signing of non-disclosure agreement.

(vi) The company when entering into roaming agreements with service providers outside India must provide, on demand, the list of such users (telephone numbers, in case of foreign subscribers using Indian Operator's network while roaming).

(vii) The Company must provide traceable identity of their subscribers. However, in case of providing service to roaming subscriber of foreign Companies, the Indian Company shall endeavor to obtain traceable identity of roaming subscribers from the foreign company as a part of its roaming agreement.

(viii) No traffic (mobile and landline) from subscribers within India to subscribers within India shall be hauled to any place outside India.

(ix) No Remote Access (RA) shall be provided to any equipment manufacturer or any other agency out side the country for any maintenance/repair by the licensee. However, RA may be allowed for catastrophic software failure (such as failure to boot up etc.) which would lead to major part of the network becoming non-functional for a prolonged period, subject to meeting the following conditions:-

(a) An identified Government agency (Intelligence Bureau) will be notified, when RA is to be provided.

(b) Remote Access password is to be enabled for a definite period only and only for access from pre-approved locations of the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) Vendors and only for the equipments specifically under repair/maintenance.

(c) The control of Remote Access i.e. activation, transfer of data termination etc. shall be within the country and not at a Remote location, abroad.

(d) The Government agency will be given all support to record the transactions for on-line monitoring.

(e) Any equipment or software that forms part of the overall monitoring shall not be permitted to have remote access under any circumstances.

(f) DoT will define appropriately the terms catastrophic software failure, major part of the network, and prolonged period used under this clause.

(x) It shall be open to the Department of Telecommunications to restrict the Licensee Company from operating in any sensitive area from the national Security angle.

(xi) In order to maintain the privacy of voice and data, monitoring shall only be upon authorization by the Union Home Secretary or Home Secretaries of the States/Union Territories.

(xii) For monitoring traffic, the licensee company shall provide blind access of their network and other facilities as well as to books of accounts to the security agencies.

(xiii) In case of not adhering to Licence conditions envisaged in para G. the licence(s) granted to the company shall be deemed as cancelled and the licensor shall have the right to encash the performance bank guarantee(s) and the licensor shall not be liable for loss of any kind.

2. The conditions at para 1 above shall also be applicable to the existing companies operating telecom service(s) which had the FDI cap of 49%.

3. The relevant provisions of FDI policy for 'investment companies', as given in Press Note 2 (2000 series) dated 11.2.2000 issued by department of Industrial Policy and Promotion will no longer be applicable to telecom sector.

4. An initial correction time of 4 months from the date of issue of this notification shall be allowed to the existing licensee companies providing telecom services mentioned in para 1 above for ensuring adherence to the aforesaid conditions. An unconditional compliance to the aforesaid conditions shall be submitted to the licensor within this period.

5. Press Note 15 (1998 series) and Press Note2 (2000 series) issued by Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion stand modified to the above extent.

Sd/-
(UMESH KUMAR)

Joint Secretary to the Government of India

No. 9 (1)/2002-FC dated 3rd November, 2005