

Press Release on the Visit of Sh. Sachin Pilot, Hon'ble Minister of State for Communication and Information Technology, Government of India, to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh on 2nd February, 2010

Union Minister of State for Communication and IT Sh. Sachin Pilot chaired meeting to Review the progress of projects and schemes of Department of Information Technology, Project Arrow in Department of Posts, and progress of USO Fund Schemes in the North Eastern states. Addressing IT Secretaries of the North-Eastern States, Shri Pilot emphasized the pivotal role of connectivity in assisting social and economic uplift of all sections of people. He remarked that States needed to implement the Common Service Centres under the National e-Governance Programme in a time bound fashion. In all, 5,745 CSCs would be rolled out in the North-East, of which 3,477 have been set up so far.

Speaking about the commitment of BSNL to deliver high quality telephone and broadband services to the remotest parts of the North-East at affordable prices, the Minister disclosed that BSNL had spent over Rs. 1000 crores in the last three years. During the last quarter of the current Financial Year (2009-2010), 328 Mobile BTS would be added. In 2010-2011, a further 843 towers would be put up to aid subscriber base and tackle issues like traffic congestion and call drops. By April 2010, 209 new towers would be set up under the USOF Scheme. 40,000 new broadband connections would be provided. Planned fund outlay for this is around Rs. 384 crores. Sh. Pilot exhorted the BSNL officials to put in their best to improve the quality of services. With these efforts, the number of telephone subscribers in the North-East is expected to grow from 28.15 lakhs in December 2009 to over 32 lakhs by March 2010.

Sh. Pilot then visited Chhoygaon in Kamrup to launch WiMax, BSNL's high speed wireless data services in Rural areas of the North East. He underlined the commitment of the UPA government to deliver services such as tele-medicine, tele-education, government services like issue of birth and death certificates right at doorsteps of the people. This wireless Technology was especially suitable for difficult geographical areas where laying cables was cumbersome and expensive. He also called upon the Chief Minister of Assam, Sh, Tarun Gogoi along with senior BSNL, Postal and Department of IT officials.

Reviewing the performance of Department of Post, Sh. Pilot noted the importance of Department of Posts in delivering crucial services to rural and areas. Interacting with the media, he informed that the Department has taken a number of initiatives to offer a wider variety of services to the people. These include electronic money orders, instant money orders, savings bank accounts, NREGA accounts, and insurance- especially micro-insurance- services. Daporijo Post Office has already started selling Railway tickets from 8th January, and soon, Railway Tickets would also be available in Ying Kyong Post Office. Another 24 post offices have been identified in the North-East where Railway Tickets would be sold. Over 90 vehicles, including Mail Motor Vans and Motor-cycles have been provided to improve collection and delivery of mail. He mentioned that with implementation of the Natarajamurthy Committee Report, emoluments of Gramin Dak Sewaks had significantly improved, and they were now being given some maternity benefits and cycle allowance.

In the afternoon, Sh. Pilot arrived in Itanagar and laid the foundation stone for the Itanagar Head Post Office in the Presence of Sh. Takam Sanjoy, MP, and Sh. Techhi Taso, MLA. The 3-storey building would also house the office of Director of Postal Services. Sh. Pilot assured that this post office would be developed to the highest standards under Project Arrow. Later he chaired a meeting with senior officers of BSNL, Department of Posts and Department of Posts, where issued specific to Arunachal Pradesh were discussed.