

Press release-

Shri Sachin Pilot Hon'ble Union Minister of Communications & IT called on the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam Shri Tarun Gogoi at his residence at 9.45 A.M on 2nd February 2010 and a brief meeting on Information Technology and Communications concerning the State and the NE Region was also held. Other members present in the meeting from the Government of Assam were:-

1. Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Hon'ble Minister of IT, Health, GDD etc
2. Smt. T.Y. Das IAS, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, Assam
3. Shri Niraj Verma, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, IT, Govt. of Assam
4. Shri M.K. Yadava, IFS, MD, AMTRON.

Members present from the Union Ministry of Communications & IT,

1. Shri S.P Singh, Sr. Director, DIT
2. Shri A.K. Balani, Sr. Director, DIT
3. Shri J.K.Roy, ED(CA), BSNL
4. Shri N.N Banerjee, CGM, BSNL
5. Shri M.. Kumar, Chief Postmaster General

In this meeting a brief review of the NeGP projects and communications and connectivity related issues, and some new initiatives were taken up.

Hon'ble Chief Minister apprised the Union Minister of severe bottlenecks of connectivity in Assam and N.E. Region including Internet connectivity, domestic connectivity and mobile connectivity and issues such as problems of roaming in prepaid connections, poor mobile foot print etc were discussed.

Hon'ble Chief Minister and the IT Minister, Assam impressed upon the Hon'ble Union Minister to provide international connectivity through the Sea-ME-We-4 dropping at Cox Bazar, which is just 450 km from Guwahati. Through a self healing OFC ring network from Cox Bazar to Guwahati, the major international Internet connectivity issues would become almost non-existent, and the NE Region would become an added source of supply of bandwidth to the rest of India. Hon'ble Union Minister appreciated the proposal and acknowledged that with tapping of this dropping especially the bottlenecks at chicken's neck area (narrow area at Siliguri) will be removed. He decided to look into the matter positively once the proposal is received from the State Government.

Hon'ble Chief Minister pointed out to lack of critical IT infrastructure in the region. During the discussion, CGM, BSNL pointed out that the entire billing and call centre operations take place at Kolkata which often gets disrupted due to fibre cut at Siliguri. Hon'ble Union Minister was requested to do the needful to relocate such services to the North East, so that the ICT infrastructure in the region grows. Hon'ble Chief Minister pointed out to poor mobile coverage and poor Quality of Mobile Services. Hon'ble Union Minister assured him to take up the issue of roaming on pre-paid connections. He also assured the Chief Minister that about 1200 BTSs would be installed in the remote areas of the State which would increase the mobile foot print in the State, especially in the border and the other remote areas. This would also ensure a very high availability of network along the National Highways and State Highways. The Union Minister sought the cooperation of the State Government in implementing various IT and Communications projects being carried out in the State. Hon'ble Chief Minister assured of all help, and directed the Principal Secretary to CM to coordinate so that all the issues get resolved amicably.

The Hon'ble Union Minister appreciated the efforts of the State Government in implementing the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). He was very appreciative of the notification by the Government to provide 15 G2C services through the CSCs, and also appreciated the fact that all VLEs have been declared Stamp Vendors. Hon'ble Chief Minister and Hon'ble IT Minister requested the Union Minister to extend the e-District project to the whole of Assam.

Hon'ble Union Minister also discussed about a new proposal of laying Optical Fibre Network in Assam upto block level. The value of project would be approximately Rs. 250 Crore. Hon'ble IT Minister also submitted a memorandum to the Hon'ble Union Minister highlighting the various issues and aspiration of the Govt. of Assam. He also requested, in the memorandum, Hon'ble Union Minister to fund the State Govt initiative of OFC over Power lines, code named Project ADON costing about Rs. 450 crore for domestic rural connectivity.