

## COAI & CII organizes Roundtable for Robust Digital Communication Infrastructure in Assam



**Assam, May 29, 2021:** COAI & CII today hosted a panel discussion to address the challenges and recommendations for the creation of a Robust Digital Communication Infrastructure in the state of Assam in presence of various dignitaries representing both industry bodies. The guest of honor and keynote speaker for the event was Mr. Jishnu Barua, Chief Secretary, Government of Assam, who participated in the in-depth discussion for public policies and state-based initiatives.

The context for this discussion was addressed by Mr. Pradeep Bagla Chairman, CII Assam State Council, and Managing Director Amrit Cement Ltd in his opening remarks, followed by Lt Gen Dr. S P Kochhar, Director General, COAI. The notable speaker list for the panel discussion included Sh. T.K Paul Member (T), Department of Telecom (DoT) and Sh. Amit Mishra Senior DDG (DoT), Sh. Sovan Mukherjee CEO, Assam Circle Bharti Airtel Ltd, Sh. Sunando Shome CEO Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd and Sh. Sanjib Bora Cluster Head, East India Vodafone Idea Ltd, moderated by Mr. Vikram Tiwathia Deputy Director General, COAI.

**Speaking on the occasion Sh. Jishnu Barua, Chief Secretary, Government of Assam** said, “The state of Assam has become the first north eastern state where villages are digitally connected. State is also planning to organize financial inclusion and digital literacy campaigns in rural areas. Government will further facilitate the creation of the robust and reliable Telecom and Digital Infrastructure in the State”.

**Speaking on the occasion Sh. T.K Paul, Member (T), DoT** said “Under the National Broadband Mission (NBM), the government envisaged providing broadband access to all villages in the country. DoT is holding regular review meetings of NBM and SBC having members from State Govt. officials and the industry to monitor the progress and extend help for resolution of issue.”

**Speaking on the occasion, Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI** said: *“We are thankful to everyone who participated and helped address the issues and challenges faced by the industry for further creating a robust telecom infrastructure in Assam. COAI works closely with DoT, State Govt. and industry to achieve targets set under the National Broadband Mission (NBM) and to develop innovative implementation models for Right of Way (RoW). We have been constantly working with States/UTs to provide consistent inputs to policies about expansion of digital infrastructure including for RoW approvals required for laying of OFC.*

**Mr Pradeep Bagla, Chairman, CII Assam State Council & Managing Director, Amrit Cement Ltd.** stated that “At times of the pandemic like this, Information Technology and telecom played a crucial role and have come to the forefront as critical enablers. The role of digitization became evident from the data traffic surged on the telecom networks fueled by the new Work from Home culture, increased reliance on e-commerce, social media and digital platforms to meet the daily and social needs of citizens.”

The discussion explored key aspects of technology and digitization initiatives that can unlock scalability and faster monetization for the state. Panelists highlighted their vision for creating robust infrastructure in the State and thus providing good Quality of Service to the Citizens. They also shared their views and recommendations on how various RoW related challenges can be addressed by collaborative approach between State Govts, DoT, Telecom Industry and other stakeholders.

It was highlighted that since the Government has been investing heavily to democratize broadband and its services, there are various initiatives such as Make in India, Digital India, BharatNet, and Skill India which are helping to drive the change in the sector. India as a country is ready for the big leap of 5G, as, at 1.2 billion, the subscriber base is bigger than the population of some countries put together, supported by the evolving consumption patterns of subscribers and conducive regulatory environment.

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