

Minutes of Meeting of State Broadband Committee held under the Chairmanship of Shri S. C. Gupta, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Sikkim on 30.05.2022 at 3:00 PM at Conference Hall, Tashiling, Secretariat, Gangtok.

The Meeting commenced with the Welcome address by Shri J. Kole, Director Sikkim, DoT followed by brief introduction by the participants.

Shri S C Gupta Chief Secretary observed that, barring a short period, regular posting of CGM, BSNL in Gangtok has still not taken place, despite the decision taken at highest level. The CS requested DDG DOT Sikkim to take up the matter with the competent higher authority.

[Action by: DDG, DoT Sikkim]

DDG in his presentation highlighted the progress made towards improving connectivity like number of Tower/BTS, BTS fiberisation, OFC cable laid, Air-fibre connection, FTTH connection etc. since last SBC meeting held. Further, DDG DoT highlighted progress of telecom network made in Dzongu assembly constituency area. As of now high-speed internet is available under BharatNet program in 1 BAC and 2 GPUs namely Passingdang, Passingdang-Saffo and Lingdong-Barfok and 5 more GPUs will be connected within 30 days by BSNL. RJIL has installed 3 new BTSs and work is in progress in three more BTSs.

The CS agreed that there is some improvement in terms of coverage but availability of internet and its speed in the state (particularly in rural areas) remain cause of concern which is hampering the works in different Departments like RDD, Education Dept., Tourism etc. The CS has urged the TSPs to improve the network performance in Sikkim. DDG directed all TSP's to take corrective measures immediately to improve the services and submit the action plan within a month.

During the presentation, The CS observed that many (517 numbers) 2G BTSs are working in Sikkim and requested all TSP's to migrate to adequate number of 3G/4G BTS to get better internet speed. The committee opined that TSPs should replace 2G BTSs with 3G/4G BTS.

[Action by: All TSPs]

Regarding formation of District level committee, the CS enquired about the status from IT Department. IT Dept. informed that file was processed and approved. The notification is pending to be issued. The CS directed the IT Dept. to issue the notification at the earliest.

[Action by: IT Dept., Govt. of Sikkim]



Agenda wise discussions:

1. Review of Bharat Net Project roll-out status (Phase I & II).

• Out of total 13 VSAT sites, 12 have been installed, 6 sites are working and six are reported faulty. CGM BBNL informed that faults would be attended in a week time. 1 VSAT will be installed in new location namely, BEN NAMPHRIK in Temi Block. BBNL has to put system in a place to rectify faults with least time and adequate spares.

[Action by: BBNL]

• Regarding connectivity of BHQ/GPUs under BahratNet OFC, GM, BSNL Sikkim informed that 55 GPUs assessed for cable damage portion spread across multiple locations.

- ❖ 14 Km Cable laying is required.
- ❖ Jointing work to be carried out in 151 locations.
- ❖ BSNL CO has given approval to carry out the restoration works.
- ❖ Tender will be floated soon.

DDG directed BSNL take steps to rectify the damaged portion and lit up the GPUs in fast track mode. Monthly report to be sent to DoT Sikkim Unit.

[Action by: BSNL Sikkim, BBNL]

2. Fiberisation of BTS/Towers.

At present overall BTS fiberisation is 36.77% in Sikkim. As per the NBM target Fiberisation to be achieved at 55%. CS requested to expedite the fiberisation process as per target. DDG directed to submit the plan within 15 days and act immediately towards achieving the target and operators have agreed.

[Action by: All TSPs]

3. Review of Charges Rs. 1000/- per pole as per Clause No. 6.4 of Sikkim Govt. RoW policy for laying of aerial cable/OFC

DDG presented the comparison table of charges in Sikkim vis-à-vis other states. DDG and COAI has requested the CS to review present charges. The CS agreed and directed the IT Dept. to process the proposal to align the charges with other states.

[Action by: IT Dept., Govt. of Sikkim]

4. Laying of OFC Cable & Bandwidth capacity creation up to GPU/BHQ level by PGCIL.

In 19 Blocks, PGCIL made 1 TB bandwidth readily available and in 13 blocks 1 TB bandwidth will be available by October 2022. TSPs told that hiring charges from PGCIL is very high. PGCIL has informed that so far, they have not received request from any TSP. DDG directed TSPs to submit their requirement and

issues to PGCIL in writing within 20 days. PGCIL may examine the TSP's request of giving PGCIL dark fibre on lease basis.

[Action by: All TSPs & PGCIL]

5. **Expediting permission process for electricity connection for new mobile tower and rationalization of power charges.**

Shri T. R. Dua, DG-DIPA mentioned that high EB charges in Sikkim is very serious issue. For one site estimated amount for Electricity connection is coming around Rs. 15-16 lakh. It is very high compared to other states even if compared with other hilly states of India. After detailed discussion CS informed that industry may install their own power set-up, State Govt. will provide the connection.

6. **Issues faced by TSPs with GMC and Smart-City authority i.r.o. laying of Under Ground cable.**

It has been decided that individual TSPs to approach GMC and Smart-City authority for cable laying work issues.

7. **Issues/Points emerging from the Sub-Committee (Ref: TRAI Chairman meeting in Gangtok on 23.08.2021) meeting on improvement of Quality of Service of Telecom and Internet in Sikkim.**

The following interim recommendations of sub-committee have been suggested by DDG and same was discussed:

- a. *Short-Closure of BharatNet Project (except for 55 GPUs where BSNL identified the cable damage and working on it).*

Decision taken: BBNL/BSNL may explore any other mode of work execution to expedite the work on fast track mode. If no other option available, then project may be short-closed in Sikkim. Firm plan may be submitted in 30 days' time.

[Action by: BSNL Sikkim, BBNL]

- b. *As an immediate measure at least 100 VSAT terminals for BAC/GPU's may be sought from DoT under USOF Scheme/ any other scheme to connect BAC/GPU's.*

Decision Taken: In view of in-ordinate delay and no firm commitment from BBNL/BSNL on completion of the BharatNet Project, as on date only 3 GPUs through OFC and 12 GPU through VSATs are lit up out of 207 BHQ/GPU. In order to provide immediate connectivity to remaining BHQs/GPUs, at least 100 VSATs may be allocated by competent authority in DoT.

[Action by: DoT Sikkim, Govt. of Sikkim]

- c. *Space allocated to RJIL in 134 GPU/BAC locations for installation of towers. Out of these, 123 sites are not required by RJIL as they have been*

covered by present network. Therefore 123 GPU sites may be offered to other TSP's.

Decision Taken: TSP's may submit the request to IT Dept. within a month, on receipt of the requests for space the same may be allocated to other TSPs.

[Action by: Airtel, BSNL, VIL]

- d. Requirement of funds for BSNL for relaying of OFC damaged due to Smart city Project: Estimated Cost Rs. 2,23,86,793/-

Decision Taken: Govt. of Sikkim will formally request DoT for funding.

[Action by: DoT Sikkim, Govt. of Sikkim]

- e. Requirement of funds for BSNL for upgradation of telecom network in Gangtok City: Estimated Cost Rs. 45 Crores.

Decision Taken: Govt. of Sikkim may formally request DoT for funding.

[Action by: DoT Sikkim, Govt. of Sikkim]

- f. Action by BSNL to strengthen BSNL Long Distance backhaul network.

Decision Taken: CGM, BSNL may write to BSNL C.O. immediately.

[Action by: BSNL Sikkim]

- g. Tower sharing should be made mandatory between TSP's in Sikkim context.

Decision Taken: On tower sharing issue, COAI has informed that industry is following the best practice of sharing the tower. However, Shri Rahul K. IAS, DC Gangtok informed that near DC court one tower has not been given by Indus to BSNL for sharing. The CS has directed Indus to resolve the issue with 48 hours. Further, DDG requested the TSPs/IPs to be liberal on tower/BTS sharing in order to provide good coverage and better user experience in Sikkim context.

- h. 359 villages identified (presently coverage less than 60%) for providing better coverage.

Decision Taken: Govt. of Sikkim may formally request DoT for early decision on allotment of Telecom Equipment to cover all 359 villages as identified jointly by Govt. of Sikkim and DoT Sikkim Unit.

[Action by: DoT Sikkim]

8. Specific Issues/ Concerned of TAIPA/COAI

- a) COAI suggested that in future all the electric poles may be designed as smart pole to house communication equipment/devices. The CS has requested the power department to examine the proposal.

[Action by: COAI, Dept. of Power]



- b) COAI also requested that in all upcoming buildings optical fibre cable may be made part of new building plan approval. The CS requested the Secretary, UDD to examine the proposal.

[Action by: COAI, UDD]

9. Any other points/issue with permission of chair.

- a) The chief Secretary expressed his desire to be part of ministry level discussion on telecom connectivity issues to present state specific requirements and suggested DDG to inform appropriate authorities. DDG may convey this to DOT.

[Action by: DoT Sikkim]

- b) Secretary UDD mentioned that none of the TSPs is having trade license in Sikkim. After discussions, it has been decided that TSPs should register for trade license.

[Action by: All TSPs]

- c) With respect to assessment of telecom coverage in home-stays in Sikkim, TSPs need Lat-Long information. IT Department was requested to provide the same.

[Action by: Dept. of IT]

- d) RJIL has already posted Nodal officer in Sikkim. Airtel and VIL are required to take immediate action to post Nodal officer/Senior level officer who is authorised to take decisions.

[Action by: Airtel, VIL]

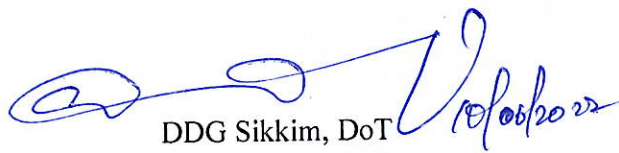
- e) The CS said that services in VIP colony remain poor in spite of having one tower served by two operators (Airtel and RJIL). DDG directed both the TSPs to take immediate action to improve the network performance VIP colony and other Govt. Departments.

[Action by: Airtel, RJIL]

- f) Further, in order to ensure better coverage by BSNL in VIP colony and other Govt. Departments, DDG requested GM, BSNL Sikkim to take up the matter with Corporate Office for allotment of BTS/IBS/Mini Cells etc. within 15 days.

[Action by: BSNL Sikkim]

The meeting ended with thanks to the chair.


DDG Sikkim, DoT
Member-Convener SBC

List of Participants:

1. Shri S C Gupta. IAS, Chief Secretary. Govt. Of Sikkim
2. Shri N Murali Krishna. ITS. Deputy Director General. DoT. Govt. of India
3. Shri C S Rao, IFS, Pr. Secretary, Rural Development Department. Govt. of Sikkim
4. Shri M. T. Sherpa, Secretary, UDD, Sikkim
5. Shri A K Sinha, CGM, The State Head, BBNL, WB
6. Shri Edwin Swer, ITS, GM, BSNL, Gangtok
7. Shri Jayanta Kole, ITS, Director. DoT Govt. of India
8. Shri Kishore Gajmer, Principal Chief Engineer, Power Department, Sikkim
9. Shri Gloria Namchu, Special Secretary, Education Department, Sikkim
10. Shri Shibashis Giri, Chief Manager, Power Grid, WB
11. Shri Lakpa Sherpa, CEO, Gangtok Smart City
12. Lt Col PPS Dhillon, Director Planning, BRO, Sikkim
13. Shri Jigme Namgyal, Chief Engineer, Power Department, Sikkim
14. Shri Samrat Pradhan, Deputy Director, IT Deptt., Sikkim
15. Shri Bhaichung Bhutia, Assistant Director, IT Deptt., Sikkim
16. Shri H. K. Chettri, Municipal Commissioner, Gangtok
17. Shri Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, S.O. to C.S., Sikkim
18. Shri Anil Bhati, PRO to GM, BSNL, Gangtok
19. Shri Pratap Ch. Pradhan, Dy. CTO/OPS Head, Bharti Airtel Ltd., WB & Sikkim
20. Shri Arun Das, Nodal Officer, Bharti Airtel Ltd., WB & Sikkim
21. Shri Ashwani Thakkar, G.M., Regulatory & Corporate Affairs, Vodafone Idea Ltd., WB & Sikkim
22. Shri Subhashis Sarkar, Zonal Manager, O&M, Tata Communications
23. Shri Mithun Basak, Field Engineer, Vodafone Idea Ltd.
24. Shri Nihar Sarkar, Head North Bengal & Sikkim, Reliance Jio Ltd., Sikkim
25. Shri Suman Pradhan, Nodal Officer, Reliance Jio Ltd., Sikkim
26. Shri Promod Dubey, Dy. Manager,
27. Shri Noor Hasan Lodi, RE
28. Shri Sanjeev Pradhan, Manager, ROW & Permissions

Following Participants joined through VC




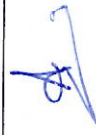




1. Shri Rahul K., IAS DC Gangtok
2. Shri Bhim Thatal, DC, Soreng
3. Shri Lt. Gen. Dr. S P Kochhar, DG COAI and team
4. T. R. Dua, DG DIPA and team

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