'India Internet Governance Conference' on 4th & 5th October
Internet an indispensible tool for governance in a free democracy: Sibal

NEW DELHI, September 24, 2012. Mr. Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology, made clear today that there would be no restrictions whatsoever on the use of internet. Addressing a curtain raiser ceremony of 'India Internet Governance Conference (IIGC)' to be held in October in New Delhi, he appealed to the stakeholders to help evolve a consensus so that a clear-cut roadmap could be developed for the sector. The curtain raiser was organised by FICCI in association with Ministry of Communications & IT and Internet Society. Mr. Sibal described the internet as an indispensible tool for governance in a free democracy, a tool that could help deliver services to the people transparently and eliminate the go-betweens between the government and the people.

The theme of IIGC is 'Internet for Social and Economic Development: Building the Future Together' which would provide a platform for an open and inclusive policy dialogue involving the government, business, civil society, technical community and academia. It will traverse a wide range of topics; from network neutrality, to global internet governance models; from effective management of the transition to IPv6, to making broadband access available to all; from the challenges the internet poses to traditional media, to the challenges hate speech online poses for all.

Mr. R Chandrashekhar, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications & information Technology, Government of India, stated that internet today impacts both the users and non-users. With the use of internet, public interest is at stake and all stakeholders need to reconcile the divergent issues and then take them up appropriately at the international forum.

Mr. N Ravi Shankar, Administrator, USOF and CEO, Bharat Broadband Project, said that under Mr. Sibal's guidance National Optical Fibre Network for Broadband Connectivity to Panchayats and National Telecom Policy 2012 have been rolled out to embrace the internet revolution in the country. The National Optical Fibre Network has been termed as a Public-Private-Panchayat partnership as the effort is to connect the village Panchayats with the rest of the country.

Ms. Anu Madgavkar, India Head and Senior Fellow, McKinsey Global Institute, remarked, "India ranks low when it comes to internet penetration and contributes directly 1.6 per cent of GDP which amounts to $30 billion. It could reach $100 billion by 2015 if we are able to connect the nation virtually."

To achieve this target five things needed are: internet reaching the smaller towns, cities and villages; reduction in total cost of ownership; enabling large scale digital literacy; increase in the range of internet use in new areas and a favourable business environment.

Mr. Sidharth Birla, Vice President, FICCI, pointed out the challenges that internet is posing today. With the increased penetration of internet, we need higher standards of governance to

ensure cyber security. The stakeholders should aim to provide broadband accessibility at a reasonable price, he said.

Mr. Virat Bhatia, Chairman, Communications & Digital Economy Committee, FICCI, said, "The Government's initiative 'Bharat Broadband' can only be successful if it goes out of Delhi and reaches the interiors of the country." FICCI, he said, had already initiated a drive under which multi-stakeholder meetings were being organised with respect to internet governance. He invited all stakeholders to participate and voice their opinions and concerns freely in the conference to be held in October.

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