

Hon. Shri Manoj Sinha, Minister of State (Independent Charge)

For Communication and Minister of State for Railways.

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Namaste and Good Afternoon.

At the outset, I would like to extend sincere thanks to the Government of India for hosting this International Ministerial Conclave at the India Mobile Congress, 2018 in this beautiful and historic city of Delhi.

As Information and Communication Technology has been not only an integral part of the life of common people but also a key enabler of the progress, prosperity and development in the twenty first century. Digital technologies are the source of creation and innovation that has brought revolutionary changes in all spheres of life and has a tremendous potentials for transformation in the days to come. In this context, organizing this mobile congress with the theme of “**New Digital Horizon: Connect, Create and Innovate**” is highly relevant and important.

Connectivity spur economic dynamism in this region. Robust connectivity helps contacts, interaction and dealings in all dimensions of societies.

Distinguished Delegates,

Nepal has embarked into the era of political stability after a long transition. Economic development and prosperity is a focus of the current Government which is a long-cherished dream of the people of Nepal. Our Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli has a vision of "Prosperous Nepal Happy Nepali". I believe, to achieve this vision, digital transformation will be a key enabler. Therefore our ministry is working on Digital Nepal Framework

focusing on the use of ICT in key areas such as agriculture, health, education, urban infrastructure, energy, tourism, finance and connectivity.

Access to ICT and connectivity for every citizen is a basic need for a digital society. For mountainous countries like Nepal ensuring broadband connectivity to our citizens is a major challenge. Despite these challenges, we have already initiated projects to connect every local level offices, community high schools and health posts within next two years with high-broadband internet connection.

The whole region of South Asia and South East Asia is bound by common heritage and glorious history. Eastern philosophy is full of knowledge, rich traditions and precious values. Enhanced connectivity through digital technologies would help to spread this philosophy not only within this region but also all over the world.

Physical, digital and human connectivity should go hand in hand for multi-dimensional integration of the region. This dimensional connectivity should be able to foster not only economic growth but also socio-cultural values.

Nepal attaches high importance to enhance digital connectivity within and beyond the country, particularly in this region. But we should be aware that digital technology brings not only positive impacts but also some negative pitfalls in society. Our focus should be developing and expanding such a technology that is safe and secured to our people.

We would like to emphasize on collaborative efforts and commitments for our common regional initiatives, such as; seamless connectivity, empowering and strengthening the regional ICT forums, reducing the connectivity cost, fighting against cyber threat by building secure, reliable and trust-worthy network and services, standardization of ICT equipment and services and harmonizing radio spectrum throughout the region, additional spectrum to

ensure broadband for all and reducing the roaming and telephone tariff across the region.

We would like to emphasize on bridging the digital divide, reduction of cost through infrastructure sharing, digital inclusion, mobile financing, creation of smart village and cities to build smart societies, promotion of green ICT technologies, digital skill development.

We have already initiated sub-regional connectivity program such as SASEC, Information Highway connecting Nepal, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. We look forward to expand this or similar networks to other countries with effective use.

We need to focus on development of local content and services to leverage maximum benefit of the technology overcoming language barriers. This will help and motivate peoples to use digital technologies.

Distinguished Delegates

From the devastating earthquake in 2015 in Nepal, we have learned a lesson that ICT can be an instrument to deal with disasters.

We now have developed a national emergency telecommunication continuity plan to minimize the disaster impact and reduce natural casualties. Since the disasters are borderless, collaboration in regional level to have a collective disaster response plan and early warning system would be highly effective. Nepal would like to request all member states to come up with common regional framework for use of ICT for disaster preparedness and response.

We hope the co-operation and partnership will be further enhanced in coming days for technology transfer, human resource development, and special arrangement for LDC's and land-locked countries for worldwide connectivity through ICT and build knowledge-based Information society.

BIMSTEC is a common forum that links two dynamic regions of South Asia and South East Asia.

I would like to re-call fourth BIMSTEC Summit declaration, 2018 which “(quote) Decide to establish a Working Group to deal with information technology and communications related matters with a view to provide greater access, more affordable and high-speed internet and mobile communications to the peoples of the region (unquote)”. This will ultimately help achieve the targets of Connect 2020 envisioned by ITU, goals and targets of SDG 2030 and vision for WSIS beyond 2015.

I believe, this Conclave will be a foundation for future cooperation among ASEAN and BIMSTEC member countries to encourage bilateral discussions, knowledge sharing, common policy development and adoption with a special emphasis on the development of home-grown technology.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of India for providing excellent hospitality to me and my delegation.

Thank you.