

The Science, Indigenous Technology and Advanced Research Accelerator

**To**

**Shri Ajit Doval**

**National Security Advisor**

**Prime Minister’s Office**

**New Delhi-110011**

**BSNL partnership with Airbus for “secure” communications on BSNL’s mobile networks**

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Dear Sir,

In view of your steadfast promotion of National Security and the national interest, we wish to draw your kind attention to media reports wherein Airbus’s Tactilon Agnet 500 platform has entered into a partnership with BSNL for providing so-called ‘secure’ communications on BSNL’s mobile networks (<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/airbus-provides-tactilon-agnet-secure-communication-services-to-bsnl/article34317724.ece>). Further the Hindu article claims this 'will allow sectors such as **defence, police and other law enforcement agencies, transport, healthcare, power utility, airports, ports, mining, oil and gas, disaster management,** and other businesses to benefit from secure voice, text, and data communications solutions, from peer to peer, or in a group, while using BSNL’s public operator telecom network'. The same can be seen on BSNL social media handles.

**From a national security perspective,** **it is highly anomalous that our public sector telecom utility is offering a platform to sell proprietary encrypted communication services from a FOEM to our sensitive strategic sectors.  GoI accords preferential treatment to services from BSNL as it’s seen as a trusted government entity. This partnership will provide preferential market access to Airbus to all of our sensitive agencies. Fostering a foreign entity that is party in worldwide surveillance programs to build a communications platform inside our telecom provider is damaging to India’s national interest and security.**

**Moreover, India has indigenous capabilities that can cater to all secure mobile communications**. **Apart from domestic private industry which has these capabilities, CDAC has been providing TETRA services, which are recognised by the office of the PSA** (PSA Office showing indigenous TETRA capabilities

<https://www.istem.gov.in/digitalcatalogue/showinfo/TP19762596902>). Also to DoT’s own "Implementation of public procurement, preference to make in India **for cyber security products**" Order (<https://dot.gov.in/circulars/implementation-public-procurement-preference-make-india-order-2019-cyber-security-products>), **preference has to be given to indigenous products by Govt departments. It is accordingly requested that BSNL be prevailed upon to provide Indian alternatives**.

**It is imperative that only indigenous capacities are used for such sensitive communications. This can be discussed with both private industry and CDAC under the supervision of your Office /by NSCS in view of its critical importance for National Security.**

**Conclusion**

**Secure and domestic ICTs underlie national technological and economic progress in this century. India must treat network security holistically. If we create the incentives in our country to promote and install domestic ICT products in our networks due to timely measures taken in the name of National Security, India can emerge as a major ICT super-power. China treats “network security as integrated rather than fragmented” and this is the reason China has caught up at warp speed in Information & Communications technologies by treating it in a holistic, strategic way. Even the UK objected to a US company Nvidia taking over Arm, an advanced semiconductor company. India cannot afford Being, Airbus or Google taking over secure communications in critical infrastructure sectors. We can assemble a team to interact with yours Sir to brief about the endless possibilities that can open up in India with a little support from the Government. Promoting domestic cyber products will provide a much-needed fillip to the Indian communications industry. This will enable compliance in letter to the PMI directive as well as the spirit of the Atmanirbhar initiatives being espoused by Hon'ble Prime Minister.**

With deep regards and best wishes for your safety and good health,

Smita Purushottam

Chairperson SITARA