

New Delhi, 18th June 2019

COMMERCE MINISTER HOLDS MEETING WITH E-COMMERCE AND TECH COMPANIES

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry & Railways, Piyush Goyal, held an extensive consultation with tech industry and e-Commerce companies in New Delhi yesterday. E-Commerce and tech companies across all segments, who have businesses in India and foreign MNCs, participated in the interactive session with Commerce & Industry Minister, Secretary Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Secretary Department of Commerce, Secretary Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The meeting was held by Piyush Goyal in order to understand their concerns and take their suggestions towards building a robust data protection framework that will achieve the dual purpose of privacy and innovation and strengthen India's position as a global tech leader with focus on trust and innovation.

All the companies who were represented in this meeting put forth their concerns related to RBI data storage requirements and processing related guidelines issued by the RBI. Deputy Governor of RBI, B.P. Kanungo, assured the industry representatives that the Reserve Bank of India will look into this.

The e-Commerce industry representatives also put forth their concerns before the Commerce Minister about the e-Commerce draft policy which they felt was not adequately consultative. Commerce Minister assured the e-Commerce industry representatives that each and every concern of the industry will be addressed and for that the Minister requested e-Commerce representatives to send their concerns in writing to the DPIIT within 10 days.

Industry representatives also informed the Minister that the consultations for the Data Protection Bill by MeitY was satisfactory but as a lot of time had elapsed and the industry was not sure about the final shape of the Bill. Secretary MeitY, Ajay Prakash Sawhney, assured the e-Commerce companies that the Bill will reflect all the consultations that had taken place with the industry during the formulation of the Bill.

The principles of data protection and privacy were discussed at length in the meeting and industry representatives requested the Minister to ensure that the Bill will have more clarity around classification of data and the manner of cross border flow of data. Commerce Minister assured that MeitY will address this concern too.

E-Commerce and tech companies also informed Piyush Goyal that the data free flow discussed in the recent G20 Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Digital Economy was a positive development for India in principle and India must participate in the discussions on digital trade but issues of concern for the country must be taken up as and when they arise during the G20 discussions.

Commerce Minister said that MeitY and National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) may deal with the concerns of companies who build products in India and store their data in the country and the Bill must reflect this.

NASSCOM President, Debjani Ghosh, put forth before the Commerce Minister the necessity of harmony across all policies of all Ministries and RBI which deal with digital trade. She also said that this meeting is happening at an opportune time when India is emerging as a data powerhouse and innovative digital technology is bringing immense economic opportunities and disruptions and allowing Developing and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to leapfrog.

Commerce & Industry Minister said that this meeting will help the Ministries of Commerce and Industry, MeitY and RBI to work in synergy towards realizing the full use of digital technology together with trade and investment and also be mindful of our national needs priorities and sensitivities.

Apart from all the major e-Commerce and tech companies in India, the meeting was attended by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Som Parkash, senior officers from Ministry of External Affairs, Department of Commerce & DPIIT. India's Ambassador to the WTO, J.S. Deepak and President and CEO of Mastercard, Ajaypal Singh Banga participated in the discussions via direct video link.

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