

Mobile Telephony to Herald Social Transformation: Pitroda



L-R: S D Saxena, Director, Finance, BSNL; Karti Chidambaram, Member, All India Congress Committee; Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Knowledge Commission; Moderator: Elliot Gerson, Executive Vice President, The Aspen Institute USA

India's telecom revolution will be precursor of yet another revolution, one that will enable social transformation on scale that has not been seen so far. Stating this, **Mr Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Knowledge Commission**, said that "we are already seeing the signs of change that are resulting from increasing mobile penetration, specially in rural and remote India."

Mr Pitroda was speaking at the session on 'Mobile India: A Marriage of Democracy and Technology' at Ideas India 2008 seminar organized by the Aspen Institute India.

The telecom czar said that the greatest benefit of the spread of mobile telephony in the country would come from the integration of various services. "It will not be very long before one can begin using one's mobile phone to access various financial, banking and health services and even for furthering one's education."

"The integration of such services with the mobile telephone will help service providers to cut transaction costs, widen their reach and ensure greater social inclusion," Mr Pitroda emphasized. The mobile phone, he said, will no longer be limited to telephony, but for this to become a reality what is needed is sustainable and scalable business plan.

Sounding a word of caution, **Mr Karti Chidambaram, Member, All-India Congress Committee**, said that the real change would actually take place when developments in technology were successfully married with growth in physical infrastructure. He, however, conceded that the spread of mobile telephony had enabled greater information sharing and access. "This was enabling people in the remotest parts of the country to actively join in the process governance," Mr Chidambaram added.

Pointing to the role played by **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, its Director (Finance), Mr S D Saxena**, said that it was the "cost-effectiveness of mobile telephony that had enabled its spread throughout the country." He said that telecom companies were today working on a host of new applications on mobile instruments, including enabling money transfers, which would revolutionise the social landscape of the country. Already, "mobile telephony subscribers in the rural areas are more effective users of the available services as compared to their urban counterparts," Mr Saxena pointed out that

The discussion was moderated by Mr Elliot Gerson, Executive Vice-President, The Aspen Institute USA, who repeated that "the telecom revolution had achieved what socialism had not been able—greater social equity."

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