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Security Threat from Chinese Telecom Equipments

The Government is aware about the Report of Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of US Government titled “Investigative Report on US National security issues posed by Chinese Telecommunications Companies Huawei & ZTE”. It is a known fact that in the modern age, telecom equipment and networks used for provisioning of telecom services are prone to spyware/malwares etc, emanating from the equipment itself or embedded software contained in it or from antisocial or anti national individuals or agencies. Such potential threats exist in the network, irrespective of the sources like telecom gear manufactured in China or supplied by some other vendors.

To address the security concerns related to telecom & telecom Network, comprehensive guidelines in the form of license Amendments have been issued to Telecom service providers on 31.05.2011 in Access Service licenses and on 3rd June’ 2011 for other licenses, in consultation with MHA and after due deliberations with Industry.

Vide these amendments, it is mandated that Telecom Service Providers are responsible for the security of their network. It is also mandated that only those network elements shall be inducted into their Telecom Network, which have been tested as per relevant contemporary Indian or International Security Standards e.g. IT and IT related elements against ISO/IEC 15408 standards, for Information Security Management System against ISO 27000 series Standards, Telecom and Telecom related elements against 3GP, 3GPP2 security standards etc from any international agency/ labs of the standards e.g. Common Criteria Labs in case of ISO/IEC 15408 standards until 31st March 2013. From 1st April 2013 the certification shall be got done only from authorized and certified agencies/labs in India. The copies of test results and test certificates shall be kept by the licensee for a period of 10 years from the date of procurement of equipment, which can be audited / demanded any time during this span, by the licensor.

Thus, a framework has already been mandated to deal with potential threats by the induction of Chinese Telecom Equipment or from any other source. So far, no specific issue has arisen due to equipment originating from any specific country. However, as and when any specific issue arises or a report is received, the regime can be further tightened for the equipments coming from a specific country or source or group of countries or companies.

Government continues to examine all new developments related to Telecom Security and regularly reviews the security arrangement in this regard in the light of such developments.

In order to increase the share of telecom equipment manufactured in the country, based on Notification of Department of Electronics & IT vide No. 8(78)/2010-IPHW dated 10th February, 2012, Department of Telecommunications has already issued the Notification vide No. 18-0712010 dated 5th October’2012 regarding domestic telecom equipment for Government procurement and Government projects.

This information was given by Shri Milind Deora, Minister of State for C&IT in written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.

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MV/RK