

Startups & Enterprises to invigorate expeditious implementation of PM WANI and Public Wi-Fi: BIF

- *BIF Connectivity Accelerator Program launched by Shri K. Rajaraman, Chairperson - DCC & Secretary – DoT at Wi-Fi India 2022 Summit*
- *Program to facilitate startups and enterprises to develop novel and innovative services & applications for broadband proliferation*

New Delhi, 22nd January 2022: Broadband India Forum, the leading independent Think-Tank and Policy Forum for Digital Communications in the country, organised the Wi-Fi India 2022 Virtual Summit today. **Shri K. Rajaraman, Chairperson - Digital Communication Commission (DCC) and Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT) was the Chief Guest** for the 3rd edition of this Annual Event, held in partnership with Bharat Exhibitions. *The BIF Connectivity Accelerator Program for awareness, facilitation and proliferation of the Digital Connectivity ecosystem in the country with special emphasis on leveraging the PM-WANI Public Wi-Fi Scheme, was also launched during the Inaugural session of the event by the Hon'ble Chief Guest.* Present on the occasion as eminent Speakers were Dr. R.K. Upadhyay, Executive Director, C-DoT as Special Guest of Honour; Mr. Osama Manzar, Founder & Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation; Mr. Rajiv Aggarwal, Head of Public Policy, India at Meta; Mr. Satyam Darmora, Co-Founder & CEO, i2e1; Mr. Srinivas Gudipudi, Founder & CEO, MatreComm Technologies Pvt. Ltd.; Dr. S.N. Gupta, Chairman of Board, Bluetown India and BIMSTEC; and Mr. K. Manohar Raja, Chairman, BIF's Wi-Fi Committee and Executive Director, RailTel who moderated the session.

A session on the vital aspect of '**How to overcome the Challenges in acceleration of PM-WANI?**' followed the Inaugural Session, with Session Chair **Shri S.K. Singhal, DDG-DS, DoT**, and Industry Experts – Mr. Bryan Tan, Director, Meta Connectivity Ecosystem; Mr. Samar Shailendra, Sr. Standards Architect, Intel; Mr. Vivek Dua, General Manager, CFA, BSNL; Prof. Rekha Jain, Visiting Prof. ICRIER; Dr. C.S. Rao, Founder & CEO, QuadGen; Mr. Sai Manapragada, Chairman & CEO, XiFi Networks; Mr. K. Manohar Raja, Executive Director, RailTel; and Mr. Rishikesh Ghare, Founder & CEO, Indio Networks Pvt. Ltd.

Chief Guest **Shri K. Rajaraman, Chairperson - DCC & Secretary - DoT**, commented on the occasion, *"Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of PM WANI is to provide quality, reliable and affordable data connectivity to the people across the nation, especially in the rural areas, where it is critical for education, healthcare and livelihood, as proliferation of Public Wi-Fi Hotspots will lead to increased employment for small and micro entrepreneurs, and provide them with an additional source of income. The telecom and internet service providers will also benefit due to the sale of bandwidth to PDOs. The developments under the scheme have been steady, with already more than 56,000 access points deployed, more than 129 PDOAs and 64 app providers registered. But there is still massive scope for growth of the Public Wi-Fi ecosystem in the country, which should be leveraged by micro and small entrepreneurs as an add-on business activity in urban and rural areas. I am pleased to know that BIF's Connectivity Accelerator Program aims to help expedite this process by facilitating a nurturing environment for entrepreneurship and innovations to flourish, and add to the success of PM WANI."*

The BIF Connectivity Accelerator Program is aimed to accelerate the transition to a digitally connected and transformed India by exploring new ways and technologies to bring fast, reliable internet to each and every person and small, medium & micro enterprises, thus enabling them to avail/deliver a plethora of digital services. The program, designed in partnership with Headstart, one of India's largest startups ecosystem enabler, is built to help accelerate startups and small, medium and micro enterprises that are building novel services and applications and/or innovating business models around PM-WANI and other connectivity initiatives, that could likely scale and become profitable. Under this program, ventures solving for the internet connectivity challenges in India, would get access to products and solutions that help them scale, industry-oriented training,

and attend workshops with access to established industry experts and mentors, as well as potential strategic partners and investors.

BIF President, Mr. TV Ramachandran, shared, *"Broadband India Forum, together with several partners, is launching the BIF Connectivity Accelerator Program to enable entrepreneurs and startups to build innovative connectivity solutions and support the Public Wi-Fi ecosystem, including the PM-WANI Public Wi-Fi Policy. This virtual program will give startups the opportunity to partner with BIF to help develop relevant use cases and help scale their businesses. We appeal to all stakeholders to come together and join hands with us to expeditiously and effectively implement this national mission."*

The program would encourage such startups as part of the ecosystem which are based and operating in India; technology-based delivery startups (hardware and/or software) or business model disruptors focused on improving digital connectivity through solutions that address the availability and affordability of Public Wi-Fi and PM-WANI initiative across the country and particularly the rural areas; startups with proven traction and relevant metrics that support the validity of their core business; with focused leadership team committed to active program participation; and compliant with any and all government regulations that may affect their business model/technology, and in possession of any certifications that are needed to run the business.

Mr. Rajiv Aggarwal, Head of Public Policy, India, Meta - a key partner of BIF's Connectivity Accelerator Program, added, *"In recent years, we have seen phenomenal growth of many young startups working on internet connectivity solutions in India. We hope this accelerator will help further stimulate startups in the connectivity ecosystem, especially PM-WANI."*

Accelerating digital connectivity through supporting startups and small, medium and micro enterprises, will help BIF enhance its mission of augmenting the broadband ecosystem and achieving faster progress towards the National policy and goals of achieving Digital India.

Visit www.bifconnectivityaccelerator.headstart.in for more information on the BIF Connectivity Accelerator Program.

About Broadband India Forum

Broadband India Forum (BIF) functions as an independent policy forum and knowledge-based think-tank that works for the development and enhancement of the entire broadband ecosystem in a holistic, technology-neutral and service-neutral manner. BIF has established itself as a thought leader and a credible and effective voice, to help propel the nation to achieve the country's ambitious vision of creating a Digital India. To achieve this, BIF works to promote the rapid development of policies, so as to facilitate affordable and high-speed ubiquitous broadband throughout the country.

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