

Broadband India Forum and Bharat Exhibitions Celebrate World Telecommunications and Information Society Day 2024!

New Delhi, 20th May, 2024: The World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (**WTISD**) 2024, which falls on May 17, was hosted by **Broadband India Forum (BIF)** and **Bharat Exhibitions (BE)** on May 15, 2024, at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi. The theme for the event was “Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development”.

This year's theme, aligned with the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) 2024-2027 Strategic Plan of universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation, presented a chance to celebrate digital innovation for sustainable development. WTISD serves as a powerful reminder that 2.6 billion people still lack internet access, missing out on the transformative potential of digital connectivity. Hence this event sought to provide an opportunity to share insights on emerging technologies, drive innovation that strengthens sustainable development, and forge partnerships – local, regional, and global – to accelerate progress.

Moreover, India's proactive Digital India initiative exemplifies this commitment. Launched in 2015, the initiative provides digital infrastructure, on-demand services, and citizen empowerment. The Digital India Initiative leverages Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) – mobile, social media, cloud computing, and data analytics to deliver citizen-centric, business-centric, and government-centric services through mission-driven projects. At this event, the esteemed speakers highlighted that embracing digital innovation can address critical issues, including the digital divide, with a multi-stakeholder approach where India can deploy innovation in technology, infrastructure, policy, and service delivery models.

The event's Chief Guest was **Shri Anil Kumar Lahoti**, Chairman, TRAI, and the Introductory Address was provided by **Ms. Aruna Sundararajan**, Chairperson, BIF. **Shri Manish Sinha**, Member (Finance), Digital Communications Commission, Department of Telecommunications, and **Shri Akhilesh Srivastava**, Advisor, ITDA, Uttarakhand were the Special Guests of Honour at the event. **The ITU Area representative for SE Asia and Pacific** who came from Jakarta, **Shri Kishore Babu G.S.C Yerraballa**, and the **Senior Advisor ITU Area Office for South Asia**, **Shri Radhacharan Shakya** also gave **Special Addresses at the event**.

Shri Anil Kumar Lahoti, Chairman, TRAI, who was the Chief Guest, pointed out that “Ensuring good health, education, economic and industrial growth remains the key focus of digital innovation. Bridging the digital divide, urban and rural connectivity are the areas to work upon. India has emerged as the 2nd largest mobile manufacturer and market in the world. Notably, India has an 87 percent fintech adoption rate which is a very positive sign for all of us. With the new Telecom Bill, the Government will be able to bring about significant changes in the telecom sector”.

The Secretary General of ITU, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin in a powerful recorded message stated that “No matter how far back in time we look, or how fast technology moves, innovation has always been a uniquely human endeavor”. In another powerful recorded message customized for the celebrations organised by BIF & BE, **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, **Director, Telecommunications Development Bureau, ITU** spoke about the role of telecommunications in society, its unified reachability, and ITU's achievements, and said that “India is making significant strides in not only bringing digital connectivity, but making technology affordable to masses”.

Ms. Aruna Sundararajan, Chairperson, Broadband India Forum, in her introductory speech mentioned that “Today we have reached a stage where everything is becoming digital. This wasn't so some years back. Ideas and intelligence are in the process of becoming commoditized, thanks to AI. Clearly, we are moving to a world that's hard to imagine; yet it is soon going to be a reality; and underlying all this will be Telecommunications”.

Shri Manish Sinha, Member (Finance), Digital Communications Commission, Department of Telecommunications, said, “The purpose of a telecommunication system is to exchange information among users of the system. The ecosystem is conducive for a country like India, which is fast on the digital track. Delivery of broadband to each and every citizen of the country should be our aim”.

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.*
