

Press release

BIF hosts a conference on "A Robust Digital Infrastructure for Bharat: The Path to Achieving Multi-Gigabit to Every Household by 2030"

New Delhi. May 13th, 2024: To highlight the growing importance of multi gigabit availability for every household to the digital requirements of the modern era, **Broadband India Forum (BIF), a leading independent think-tank and policy forum for Digital Communications in India,** conducted a conference on the balanced availability of different key elements of digital Infrastructure like, for example optic fiber, mobile towers, licensed spectrum, data centres and Wifi, CDNs, undersea cables etc. The Conference particularly stressed the paramount need for much higher availability of optic fiber to cater to the exponentially increasing quantum of data.

Dr. R.S. Sharma, former CEO of National Health Authority, former Chairman of TRAI and a key architect of Aadhaar as well as Digital India delivered the Inaugural Address as the Chief Guest of the event. Other eminent speakers in the Inaugural Session included Shri. C.B. Velayuthan, CEO, Digital Connexion; Shri. Prashant Singhal, EY Emerging Markets, TMT Sector Leader; Shri. Ashwani Rana, Vice President, BIF and Chief Public Policy Officer, Zupee. Shri Neeraj Kumar, ITS, Mission Director (National Broadband Mission), Department of Telecommunications, delivered a special keynote address as the Guest of Honour in the session. Mr. T.V. Ramachandran, President, BIF delivered a substantive data based introductory address, setting the context for the theme of the entire conference.

While India is the numero uno when it comes to data consumption on Mobile broadband and is the fastest growing mobile broadband market in the world, India lags behind in Fixed or Wired Broadband as compared to developed nations. Data shows that that there is average data consumption of 187 GB/month in India which though 10 times higher than mobile data consumption, is still significantly lower than the US data consumption of 641 GB/month. Furthermore, fixed broadband subscriptions in India are a mere 2.85 per 100 persons and it is almost 1/4th of the global average.

The conference aimed to discuss the challenges and possible strategies before the nation to achieve widespread optical fiber deployment in India with a goal to reach Gigabit connectivity to all the households or at least 100-110 Mn households by 2030. Discussions also explored building a robust and resilient core digital infrastructure, including data centers, content delivery networks (CDNs), internet exchanges, and submarine cable capacity. These infrastructure elements are crucial for providing better user experience through low-latency in internet access. The conference also sought to look at various aspects needed to make Multi-Gigabit Connectivity a reality for every Indian household by 2030.

Given this backdrop, the conference was divided into three-panel discussions, the first on "Empowering India's Digital Future: Mobilising A Collective Force for Ubiquitous Wireline Connectivity" where Shri Neeraj Kumar, ITS, Mission Director, National Broadband Mission (NBM), DoT was the Session Chair. A number of eminent subject matter experts formed a part of an engaging panel discussion, which was moderated by Dr. Mahesh Uppal.

The second-panel discussion was on "Fostering Growth in India's Data, Content, and Internet Ecosystem" where Mr. Sanjeev Banzal, DG, ERNET India, was the session chair and gave the keynote address. This was followed by an engaging panel discussion consisting of eminent panelists. This panel discussion was moderated by Ms. Amrita Choudhury, Director CCAOI.



The final panel discussion was on "Drivers of Digital Transformation in India" where Mr. Rakesh Maheshwari, Former Scientist G, Group Coordinator was the session chairman and he moderated a panel discussion on the topic with subject matter experts.

In his introductory special keynote address, while emphasizing the importance of digital infrastructure which should be shareable and interoperable for public good, **Dr. R.S. Sharma, Former Chairman of TRAI** said "Today, India needs to aggressively work for creating massive and inclusive optical fiber infrastructure to bring our country at par with China, US, and Europe in fiber broadband to provide Multi -Gigabit connectivity to every household by 2030. We also need to create millions of Wi-FI hotspots in the country which ensures affordable broadband availability to our people in rural and semi-urban areas. Simultaneously we need to invest heavily into associated infrastructure like Data centres, CDNs, and internet exchanges so as to make the multi-gigabit broadband meaningful, democratic and affordable".

Mr. TV Ramachandran, President, BIF in his welcome and introductory address, while giving the context for the theme of the event, said "India's current fixed broadband deployment cannot keep pace with exploding data consumption. With fixed broadband data usage reaching 10-20 times mobile data consumption per capita, we need a minimum 20% annual growth rate in fixed broadband subscriptions over the next six years to reach just 100 million additional fiber connections. To achieve this ambitious target, leveraging the mighty force of the vast army of over 80,000 LCOs, over 5500 PDOAs and PDOs and over 1000 smaller 1000 ISPs is essential".

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.

