

## 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 13<sup>th</sup>, 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 1/4<sup>th</sup> 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.

