

## **India's First International Subsea Cable Systems Conference Charts Path to Digital Resilience and Global Connectivity**

**New Delhi, April 9, 2025** – Broadband India Forum(BIF) in association with the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP) organized India's first-ever International Subsea Cable Systems Conference, given the urgent need for timely policy intervention and regulatory ease to transform India into a resilient and future-ready digital economy. The Conference served as a strategic platform to deliberate on one of the most critical yet under-discussed pillars of global internet infrastructure—Subsea Cables.

India's current international connectivity infrastructure is insufficient to support its growing digital ambitions. In line with the global trends, internet penetration in India is currently around 85% and additionally there has been a significant surge in the monthly data consumption both for mobile and fixed line broadband. Presently, wireline data consumption is estimated between 250-500 GB per month and mobile data consumption also continues to rise. While the proportion of fixed broadband in India is currently a mere 3% in comparison to major economies (where it is approx. 35-40%), with Government's renewed focus now on wired broadband, per-user data consumption is projected to surge further. **This growing demand urgently necessitates the proliferation of subsea cable systems and the expansion of associated Cable Landing Station (CLS) infrastructure to prevent capacity constraints and ensure seamless international connectivity.**

**Currently**, the country holds just **3% of global subsea cables (17 out of the global total of 559)** and just **14 CLSs on the main land** (~ less than 1% of the 1,636 CLS locations worldwide)—a gap that must be urgently bridged. This indicates an urgent need for a **4-5X increase in subsea cable capacity** and a **10X expansion of CLS infrastructure**. Further, given there are no back-up plans to re-route traffic of high-capacity cables landing in India. It becomes imperative to create **alternative landing sites in cities on ~ 7000 Km coastline**, especially beyond congested zones like Mumbai, to enhance redundancy and reduce vulnerability. Government should also prioritise **identifying new CLS sites** with all approvals. Given the emerging geopolitical threats and vulnerabilities of choke points like the South China Sea and Red Sea, there is need to work towards geographical diversity of subsea cable routes.

It is a fact that there is no India flagged repair ship for subsea cable repairs during exigencies and thus, there is a need to develop **indigenous repair capabilities**. This is also important to reduce repair times which are currently average between 3-5 months in case of India. Further, the experts at the Conference agreed that the Government should provide regulatory incentives for foreign repair vessels to be stationed in India.

The Conference emphasized India's **strategic geolocation** and its **unparalleled opportunity** to become a **global subsea cable transit hub**. To realise this vision as well as attract funding and investors, **there is a need to relax regulatory burden and extend incentives**. Streamlining approval processes, establishing a single-window clearance mechanism, reducing license fees for ILD operators, among others would enable ease of doing business for this sector.

**Mr. TV Ramachandran, President BIF** said: **"I would like to reiterate that subsea cable expansion cannot be regarded solely as a business endeavour. Government oversight is essential to ensure this critical infrastructure continues to remain robust, resilient and sustainable. As India advances towards becoming a *Viksit Bharat*, a strong, secure and diverse subsea cable infrastructure will be the indispensable backbone powering our future."**