

Consolidated Press Release Based Coverage

BIF Calls for Public Wi-Fi to be Recognised as a Crucial Complementary Layer of the

Broadband Infrastructure – 3 June 2026

Newspaper/Portal	Title	Link
Communications Today	BIF Calls for Public Wi-Fi to be Recognised as Broadband Infrastructure	https://www.communicationstoday.co.in/bif-calls-for-public-wi-fi-to-be-recognised-as-broadband-infrastructure/
Communications Today	PM-WANI sparks standoff between telcos and broadband advocates	https://www.communicationstoday.co.in/pm-wani-sparks-standoff-between-telcos-and-broadband-advocates/
Financial Express	Telcos, tech firms spar over public Wi-Fi	https://www.financialexpress.com/business/industry/telcos-tech-firms-spar-over-public-wi-fi/4258357/
Tele.net	BIF calls for public Wi-Fi to be recognised as a crucial complementary layer of the broadband infrastructure	https://tele.net.in/bif-calls-for-public-wi-fi-to-be-recognised-as-a-crucial-complementary-layer-of-the-broadband-infrastructure/
Voice&Data	Broadband India Forum calls for national public Wi-Fi strategy	https://www.voicendata.com/broadband/broadband-india-forum-calls-for-national-public-wi-fi-strategy-11922576
Mint	Digital divide: India's public Wi-Fi push sparks debate over use of government funds	https://www.livemint.com/industry/telecom/public-wifi-pmwani-digital-bharat-telecom-mobile-network-jio-aitel/amp-11780477930436.html
Free Press Journal	BIF Welcomes TRAI's Public Wi-Fi Push, Calls For National Strategy To Expand Affordable Broadband	https://www.freepressjournal.in/tech/bif-welcomes-trais-public-wi-fi-push-calls-for-national-strategy-to-expand-affordable-broadband
Bizz Buzz	Industry Calls for Public Wi-Fi to Become India's Next Digital Backbone	https://www.bizzbuzz.news/industry/telecom/industry-calls-for-public-wi-fi-to-become-indias-next-digital-backbone-1393029
Lokmat Times	Public Wi-Fi must be a complementary layer of India's broadband infrastructure: Industry	https://www.lokmatimes.com/business/public-wi-fi-must-be-a-complementary-layer-of-indias-broadband-infrastructure-industry/amp/
Hans India	Public Wi-Fi must be a complementary layer of India's broadband infrastructure: Industry	https://www.thehansindia.com/business/public-wi-fi-must-be-a-complementary-layer-of-indias-broadband-infrastructure-industry-1082471
Social News XYZ	Public Wi-Fi must be a complementary layer of India's broadband infrastructure: Industry	https://www.socialnews.xyz/2026/06/03/public-wi-fi-must-be-a-complementary-layer-of-indias-broadband-infrastructure-industry/

Media Coverage (Print Media)

Financial Express - June 04 2026

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Telcos, tech firms spar over public Wi-Fi

OJASVI GUPTA
New Delhi, June 3

TELECOM OPERATORS AND technology companies have renewed their long-running battle over the future of the broadband architecture, with telecom service providers arguing that public Wi-Fi has limited commercial relevance in a mobile-first market, while the Broadband India Forum (BIF) has urged the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) to recognise it as a critical complementary layer of national broadband infrastructure.

In submissions to Trai's consultation paper on the proliferation of public Wi-Fi networks, Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea (Vi) said weak consumer demand, poor monetisation prospects and market realities — not licensing barriers or regulatory constraints — have limited the success of the PM-WANI framework. BIF, whose members include technology

RENEWED RIVALRY

■ Telcos say public Wi-Fi has limited relevance due to weak demand, poor monetisation prospects

■ Tech firms argue that India risks becoming too dependent on mobile broadband sans public Wi-Fi

■ Trai is reviewing the future of a nationwide public Wi-Fi network



and digital firms such as Amazon, Google and Meta, argued that India risks becoming overly dependent on mobile broadband and should adopt a broader connectivity strategy that includes public Wi-Fi alongside mobile, fibre and satellite networks.

The submissions come as Trai reviews the future of PM-WANI, launched in 2020 to create a nationwide public Wi-Fi network through a light-touch

regulatory framework. In its consultation paper, the regulator flagged concerns around low adoption, limited commercial viability and the overall effectiveness of the model.

The latest exchange revives a familiar fault line in the telecom policy landscape. Telecom operators have consistently maintained that affordable mobile broadband and expanding 4G and 5G coverage already address connectivity needs,

while BIF has long advocated greater use of alternative broadband access technologies and unlicensed spectrum to expand connectivity and improve network efficiency.

Airtel said that given the country's low mobile data tariffs, high smartphone penetration, the sustainable revenue opportunity for public Wi-Fi remains limited. Reliance Jio identified monetisation as the sector's biggest challenge and cited RailTel's railway Wi-Fi initiative as an example of a service that achieved substantial usage but struggled to generate sustainable revenues.

BIF, however, called for public Wi-Fi to be formally anchored within the broadband architecture. "It should be viewed as a complementary broadband layer rather than a competing connectivity platform. India's future digital requirements cannot be served through mobile broadband alone," said BIF President TV Ramachandran.