BIF celebrates 25 years of the Internet in India

"Proud for having come so far, and looking forward to further facilitating internet access so that the complete benefits of the digital services revolution reach every citizen in an all-inclusive manner" – TV Ramachandran, President, BIF

White Paper on 'Internet Governance & Digital Cooperation: A Recommended Way Forward for India' released on the occasion

New Delhi, 19th August 2020: Broadband India Forum (BIF), the leading independent Think-Tank and Policy Forum for Digital Communications in the country, organised a high-profile virtual program to celebrate the historical milestone of the completion of 25 years since the launch of the Internet in India. A BIF White Paper on *'Internet Governance & Digital Cooperation: A Recommended Way Forward for India'* was also released on the occasion by **Dr. R S Sharma, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India as Chief Guest. Shri BK Syngal, Principal Advisor, BIF and CMD of the erstwhile PSU called VSNL - the entity which was responsible for the launch of Public Internet services in India on 15th August, 1995, was also present** along with **Mr. Sanjay Mashruwala, Managing Director, Reliance Jio; Mr. Ashwani Rana, Vice President, BIF and Chair of BIF's Internet Content, Applications & Governance (ICAG) Committee, and Director of Public Policy at Facebook (India, South & Central Asia);** and **Mr. Randeep Raina, Chief Technology Officer, Nokia India.**

Digital Services Connectivity has emerged as a key enabler, empowering millions and bringing about exceptional transformation in India on several fronts – the national economy, socio-economic development, and the people's way of living. The launch of Public Internet in India on 15th August 1995, by Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) was the harbinger of today's broadband services, which has been fundamental to the socio-economic growth of the country and is the prime engine of its Digital Transformation. The transformative power of the Internet is very evident in the way we communicate, seek information, conduct trade, access health and obtain other citizen centric services. The widespread proliferation of the Internet has resulted in the delivery and offtake of digital services such as e-commerce, digital payments, e-banking, e-health, e-education, e-agriculture, among others, across the country and have been instrumental in improving the way we work and live. The recent COVID-19 crisis has further reinforced the important role of the internet not only for individuals but for the industry and the government as well.

BIF President, Mr. TV Ramachandran, stated, *"On the momentous occasion of the completion of 25 years of the launch of Public Internet in India, we must all look forward to being able to further facilitate internet access in a seamless, ubiquitous and affordable manner to an equal number of people as we have today (718 million Internet subs as per TRAI PIR Dec 2019), and drive the benefits of the Internet led digital revolution to reach each and every citizen in an all-inclusive manner. With the Internet becoming the underlying infrastructure for Digital Transformation, we at BIF, look to help facilitate internet access to the farthest reaches of the nation through a prudent mix of Mobile, Wi-Fi, Satcom, Cable and other new and innovative technologies."*

The growth of internet has brought with it a significant rise in the issues pertaining to its governance. Globally there are ongoing deliberations on these issues at various forums, both at inter-

governmental level as well as on multi-stakeholder internet governance platforms. As India aspires to be a leader in the digital revolution, Indian interests need to be clearly articulated, suitably positioned, and protected both in the multilateral as well as in global Internet Governance forums such as Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Number (ICANN), and standardisation platforms viz. Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), etc.

The White Paper on **'Internet Governance & Digital Cooperation: A Recommended Way Forward for India'**, co-authored by Ms. Amrita Choudhury, Director, CCAOI and Mr. TV Ramachandran, President, BIF, provides a summary of the learnings and key takeaways for India from the three-part Digital Dialogues series on Internet Governance organised by BIF and CCAOI, in association with BE, TSDSI and ICRIER (Knowledge Partner), and provides further recommendations on the action areas for Digital Cooperation from India's perspective.

Ms. Amrita Choudhury, Director, CCAOI, shared, "*In the changing world order, it is imperative to enhance Indian engagement in global internet governance platforms, supported by adequate multi-stakeholder discussions within the country to formulate an India approach. This white paper is our attempt to initiate discussion on this important topic with suggestions such as setting up of the India IGF, hosting of IETF and IGF meetings in India, enhancing the role of the Industry and Academia in developing and setting standards; along with recommendations on the key action areas for India from the UN Secretary General's report on Digital Cooperation.*"

Broadband India Forum believes that the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Public Internet in India is a momentous occasion, and it is the complimentary and convergent nature of the two segments (mobile and internet), which have led to the impressive story signifying the march of digital connectivity and digital services transformation across the country.

About Broadband India Forum

Broadband India Forum (BIF) functions as a policy forum and think-tank that works for the development & 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.

Formed in October 2015, BIF is a dedicated forum with participation from all stakeholders, including Technology Providers, Telecom Operators, Internet Service Providers, Value-Added Service Providers, Satellite Operators and service providers, MSOs, startups and professional entities, as well as seasoned Industry professionals who are familiar with different technologies, operations, regulations and policies.

For further information, please contact:
Kaustuv Sircar – kaustuv@broadbandindiaforum.com/+91-9999326911/+91-7003157047