

SatCom should be mainstreamed to complement frontline technologies like mobile towers and fiber: Broadband India Forum

- SatCom critical to the success of the government's Digital India mission

New Delhi, November 28, 2019: Broadband India Forum (BIF), today held its fifth International Annual Satcom Summit - '**India SatCom 2019**', in New Delhi. The event was inaugurated by the **Chief Guest Dr. RS Sharma, Chairman, TRAI**, accompanied by **Special Guests of Honour, Dr. K Sivan, Secretary, Department of Space (DoS) and Chairman, ISRO (via special video address) and Shri Rakesh Sasibhushan, CMD Antrix**, who graced the occasion and addressed the gathering of delegates. The Event was attended by senior government dignitaries from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Department of Space (DoS), ISRO, Antrix, ICRIER, as well as other leading government and private technology stakeholders including leading industry experts from the satellite communications vertical – from India and abroad.

The Summit deliberated on significant issues pertinent to the sector including **In-Flight and Maritime Communications** in India, '**connected aircrafts**', **advancements in satellite technology** with a special focus on India, as well as improving the **ease-of-doing-business** to enhance private sector participation and boost FDI into the sector. The summit also reflected on **drivers for Next Generation Satcom applications and services** and **satellite broadcasting in a converged era**.

A white paper, titled "**Liberalising Satellite Communications in India: Opportunities for enhanced economic growth**" jointly developed by **BIF and Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)** was also released at the event.

In his address, **Dr. RS Sharma, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India** shared, "*There is a huge cost difference in satellite bandwidth between India and the US. The reason for this is not inefficiency of technology. The reason is that we have not allowed the SatCom sector to embrace market forces; because we have not implemented the 'Open Sky' policy which was earlier part of the earlier Telecom policy and is also a part of the NDCP 2018. There is therefore a need to implement the Open Sky policy both in letter and spirit and not be protectionist. India needs to be technology agnostic and embrace technologies that are robust, frugal, scalable and ubiquitous to overcome current terrestrial challenges such as constraints with the 'right-of-way' approach being faced in the laying of fiber. Our regulatory disadvantages need to be ironed out and the government of India, DoT, DoS and TRAI are cognizant of the need to embrace new and emerging ICT technologies including SatCom to override existing challenges, benefit multiple sectors of the economy and finally fructify India's digital dreams.*"

Multiple studies have shown how the Indian Government's Digital India initiative can benefit from satellite broadband. Remote, unconnected areas that struggle with basic needs such as electricity, are prime candidates for satellite intervention, apart from mountainous and other inhospitable terrain where satellite broadband scores over its terrestrial counterpart in terms of techno-economic feasibility.

Dr. K Sivan, Secretary, Department of Space (DoS) and Chairman, ISRO, via a special video message, conveyed - *"I thank the organisers for their efforts in organising this conference and bringing various stakeholders together. This will provide a platform to discuss various aspects of the technologies, applications and implementation. I'm sure the participants will deliberate on the new trends in satcom technology, seamless integration with terrestrial technologies, rollout plans and finally bringing the benefits to the citizens. The people living in unreached and under-reached places should get access to these technologies in order to ensure inclusive growth."*

Shri Rakesh Sasibhushan, CMD, Antrix in his address said, *"India is a space power that is recognised by the world today and this puts Indian space companies at an advantageous position as far as global space commerce is concerned. Global space commerce is pegged at US\$360 billion and is projected to grow at a CAGR of 5.6%. While the commercial space industry is a significant contributor to the western economy, in India, the domain is still in its infancy and a lot of work needs to be done for the continued growth of this critical sector. The demand for commercial satellite services is however increasing in India and we need to create a positive atmosphere for this. The Indian space sector is a closed sector and a lot of work needs to be done to open it beginning with the Space Act being put in place. But it is heartening to see many start-ups entering this sector despite the challenges, attracted to the fact that global space commerce is growing rapidly. We need to build a conducive atmosphere for the growth of private sector participation in the commercial space domain India so that the country can harness a fair share of the global space commerce market."*

The present SatCom policy in India needs to evolve further in light of the emerging requirements led by 5G and IoT among other developments. The policy would need to create a happy balance between autonomy, security and demand for services and a calibrated approach would be required to enable this and therefore bridge the communications deficit. A future roadmap to enable this call for serious engagement from all stakeholders could create an ecosystem for significant investments.

Mr. TV Ramachandran, President, Broadband India Forum said, *"Satellite communications needs further mainstreaming across India to help reach our Digital India Mission goals – specifically to bolster terrestrial technologies such as fiber and mobile towers and make them ready for the advent of 5G. To this end, India's Satcom policy should also allow for a multiplicity of SatCom technologies including new spectrum re-use, high throughput satellites, as well as LEO and MEO satellite constellations, to provide ubiquitous, high-speed broadband access across every corner of India."*

Satellite Technology has immense potential for true Broadband applications. Broadband India Forum (BIF) has been working for the cause of proliferation of broadband and sees immense potential in the use of satellite as a medium for broadband and for acceleration of the government's Digital India program. One of its core beliefs is that India needs to tap the true potential of satellite communications, not just by gainfully exploiting the spare satellite capacities over the visible Indian arc but also through pro-active and pro-industry space policy.

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 stake holders, 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.

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