

# Mainstreaming Satcom the evident way forward towards 'Digital India': BIF

**New Delhi, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021:** 'India SatCom 2021', the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Broadband India Forum's (BIF) annual flagship event commenced today. Recognised as the largest and most comprehensive conference for satellite communications in the country, the theme for India SatCom 2021 is '*Mainstreaming Satcom for Accelerating Digital India*' and the Conference is being held over a virtual platform on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The inaugural session witnessed participation from **Dr. PD Vaghela, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) as Chief Guest; with Shri K Rajaraman, Secretary - Department of Telecommunications (DoT) & Chairman - Digital Communications Commission (DCC) and Shri Radhakrishnan D, CMD, NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL) as Special Guests of Honour. They were joined by Mr. PJ Nath, MD & CEO, Tata Nelco; Mr. K Krishna, VP & CTO, Hughes India; Mr. Rahul Vatts, Director, OneWeb; and Mr. Gautam Sharma, MD, Inmarsat India, amongst other industry stalwarts, along with senior government dignitaries from NITI Aayog, TRAI, DoT, DoS, ISRO, NSIL, TEC, as well as other leading government stakeholders.**

The eminent speakers shared their views on the immense potential of satcom to augment the Digital Communications Infrastructure and Ecosystem in the country, and how it may be leveraged to help realise the national goal of 'Broadband for All', leading to a 'Digital India'. They further deliberated on various technological solutions, business models and other critical policy and regulatory measures needed to bring Satcom into the mainstream, reduce cost, improve ease of doing business, and bring about more collaboration between the private and public sector, to enhance growth along with investment opportunities in this vital domain.

With a flurry of government measures on the policy as well as regulatory fronts in the recent times, Satcom in India is well on its way to establish itself as a cost-effective means to achieve the goals and aspirations of a Digital Economy. Post the landmark announcement by the Hon'ble Finance Minister of India in May last year to open up the sector for increased private participation and involvement as part of the First set of Economic Stimulus Packages during the pandemic, a number of enabling and expeditious policy and regulatory measures including the introduction of the draft Spacecom Policy 2020 by the Department of Space (DoS); the new IR specifications released by TEC for Communication & Broadcast Networks for FSS/BSS; the landmark DCC approval which permitted use of Satcom for Cellular and Wi-Fi backhaul and TRAI's forward-looking recommendations on "Licensing Framework for Satellite based connectivity for low bit rate applications" bear testimony to this new wave of liberalization in the sector. These measures, along with those on the anvil, are expected to propel exponential growth in the sector and position satcom as a mainstream option along with terrestrial technologies to deliver Broadband to All.

Satellite internet could be an extremely effective solution for people residing in India's rural or remote areas, where providing terrestrial connectivity is a challenge - both in terms of feasibility and cost competitiveness. This is simply because Satellite connectivity is not associated with challenges of Right of Way, besides deployment costs of fibre and towers in inhospitable terrains associated with such areas. It is estimated that the cost of providing terrestrial connectivity in rural regions shoots up by almost 10-20 times, making it economically unviable for terrestrial technologies to reach the last 20% of the population.

Presently, satellite penetration in India is only 0.3 million subscribers (ICRA), and all for enterprise use. This outlines the huge pent up demand and scope of growth for satcom services in India. This untapped potential, and the growing need to augment the quality and capacity of data connectivity services in line with the incredible uptake of the same - both in the urban and rural markets - necessitates that satcom be leveraged to extract optimum benefits and utility for the people.

Satellite broadband would propel development of unique use cases in various disciplines, including Education, Healthcare, Disaster Management, e-Governance, Infotainment, Agri-tech, Transport and Logistics, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), Aeronautical and Maritime connectivity, Connected Vehicles, amongst several others. Moreover, as 5G is expected to cater greatly to agriculture, manufacturing and other segments, a majority of the operations are to be logically based in non-urban/semi-urban locations for better cost-efficiencies, made possible by availability of seamless and reliable bandwidth there. Satcom will play a major role in providing both connectivity as well as backhaul services to the networks for these crucial sectors. Since it is crucial that such key digital services are facilitated through various measures to reach the under-connected and unconnected effectively, mainstreaming Satcom would enable reaching out and delivering efficient internet connectivity to these remote locations in India, for enhanced Digital Inclusion.

**BIF President, Mr. TV Ramachandran**, shared on the occasion, *"The Government has clearly demonstrated its intent to facilitate the use of the most advanced technologies like satcom for providing efficient, reliable and affordable digital connectivity to the Indian citizens. Thanks to the new initiatives from the Government, coupled with a vibrant industry raring to get into action, we expect to see Satcom help bridge the Digital Divide, especially for providing inclusive connectivity to the farthest, remotest and most difficult-to-reach regions of the country. Liberalised mainstreaming of Satellite Communications will lend a cost-effective and reliable solution to augment Digital Inclusivity and would also be beneficial for our vision towards Atmanirbharta and Industry 4.0, benefitting the urban enterprise subscribers for various use cases such as IoT, healthcare, agri-tech, supply chain management, transportation, etc. thereby further fuelling the economic growth of the country."*

With an enabling policy and regulatory framework that is technology neutral, ensures a level playing field and provides fair and non-discriminatory market access to any type of technology initiative, Satcom stands an excellent chance to help fulfil digital goals and aspirations of 1.3 billion citizens of the country.

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#### **About Broadband India Forum**

Broadband India Forum (BIF) functions as an independent policy forum and knowledge-based think-tank that works for the development and 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.

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