

## **Accelerating Democratization of High-Speed Internet**

Information is knowledge and knowledge creates dreams. Digital India is a dream that stands on the cusp of reality.

India, in a short span of time has risen exponentially to the forefront of the global Internet community. This rise has been in sync with the ever increasing penetration of internet to the hinterlands as also the urban India.

We still have a long way to travel to reach the goal of connectivity for all. Superfast internet will generate sales and support tens of millions of jobs, but to realize this requires public and private sector collaboration to speed deployment. Policymakers can help speed internet deployment by incentivising investment in underserved areas and create policies to encourage internet/wireless innovation.

The pandemic has accelerated the speed at which digital technologies are changing lives. Almost overnight, we began working, going to school and seeing our healthcare providers remotely. However, this dramatic expansion of digitisation through connectivity and computing is not benefiting everyone at an equal rate or degree.

2021 foreshadowed the importance of top end connectivity. It changed the perception of connectivity from a luxury to a necessary service/commodity that will drive India forward. The industry needs a level playing field which incentivises and supports a small ISP at a small town to deliver connectivity at the same speed, quality, low latency as is the norm in tier 1 cities.

This would require reduction in costs for a small ISP to procure relevant traffic from the landing stations. A robust Internet Exchange network creates just that. A carrier neutral, cost and routing effective solution providing the traffic a small city needs right at the heart of the city itself. Big players need to focus towards routing their traffic effectively with less emphasis towards revenue from traffic sharing but more on reduced costs.

With the growth and penetration of Internet, revenues will flow seamlessly and cost to the end consumer shall reduce too due to economy of scales. True democratisation of Internet will be achieved when consumers at the remotest location in India will have multiple players to choose from to get on board the Digital India bandwagon.