

## Sundararajan Upbeat on Satcom for e-Connectivity

Govt committed to unlock potential of satcom to bridge digital divide, says telecom secy

### Our Bureau

**New Delhi:** Telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan Wednesday said satellite communication (satcom) is likely to play an important role in providing high-speed broadband and affordable digital connectivity.

"Satcom is expected to play an active role in providing high-speed broadband access and affordable digital connectivity to the unserved and underserved," Sundararajan said. She said the government is committed to unlocking the potential of satcom to connect the unserved and the underserved and bridge the digital divide.

Data growth is being driven by people using data for the very first time, and according to her, most of them come from India's rural hin-

terland. The government has also embarked on a roadmap to connect more than 5,000 villages in the North East and Jammu & Kashmir by satellite-driven bandwidth, as a part of the ambitious BharatNet phase-II programme.

"When it comes to providing the connectivity to deep rural and inaccessible hilly areas, there is no alternative to satcom," K Sivan, secretary, Department of Space and chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), said in a statement.

Satellite technology, according to the Broadband India Forum (BIF) has an immense potential for broadband applications.

The satellite communications ecosystem is, however, at the cusp of huge change led by new and emerging satellite technologies such as LEO (low-earth-orbit) and MEO (medium-earth-orbit) systems.

State-run telco Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) is also planning to leverage LEO satellites for connectivity in remote and far-flung areas with unfriendly terrain.

Industry estimates suggest that the satcom sector in India has an investment potential of \$100 billion.