

FICCI delegation meets I&B Minister; presents road map to boost M & E sector, hails proposal for dedicated DD channel for kids and animation

New Delhi, June 17th, 2014: Lead by its president Mr Sidharth Birla, a FICCI delegation today called on Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting (Independent Charge), Government of India, and handed over FICCI's 'Policy Roadmap for the Media and Entertainment Sector in India'. The road map comprises key recommendations for the Television, Film, Print, Radio, AVGC and Live Events sectors. FICCI is confident that the implementation of these recommendations will provide the much-needed boost to the media and entertainment sector, which has tremendous potential for dynamic growth and multiplier effect on employment generation without much spending from the public exchequer.

For the Film sector, FICCI's policy roadmap calls for enactment of the Cinematograph bill, constitution of a task force for Improving Screen Density in India and ensuring that entertainment tax is fully subsumed in the GST without creating a window for its levy at the local level.

For the TV Broadcast sector, it suggests smooth and orderly implementation of Digitization in the cable sector; relaxation in FDI limits in News Broadcasting and Infrastructure Status to the Cable sector;

As regards the Radio sector, FICCI has urged the government to ensure that the process of auctions under Phase-2 rolls out smoothly, without any further delays. The auctions should be completed by Sept-Oct 2014 and that Phase-3 licenses which expire from April 2015 are extended well before the end-date.

Further, with respect to Reduction in channel separation, the government must immediately accept TRAI's recommendations on this subject, so that an FM revolution can be brought about. More number of radio stations will also mean more job creation, and a much wider programming variety for the people of each city. The chamber has also called for allowing news in an unrestrained manner and increasing FDI in FM radio to 49

For the Print Media, FICCI has called for abolition of the Wage Board Act and urgently announce fiscal relief measures for Newspapers.

For the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comics (AVGC) Sector, it has recommended creation of an Investment Fund; Incubation and Market Development Fund; Tax Relief; Skills and Talent Development; Co-production Treaties and Focus on Kids' Channel in Terrestrial Broadcasting Space.

FICCI also wholeheartedly congratulates the Minister on his announcement regarding the launch of a dedicated channel for kids' and animation content on the national broadcaster Doordarshan. Given the vast and intensive reach of Doordarshan across the country, this initiative will – by popularizing kids' and animation content – create a demand for original intellectual properties in the sector provide an enormous boost to its growth. Indian kids' and animation content has long been battling the challenge of outpacing global competitors – and a dedicated forum for distribution such as an exclusive channel from the national public broadcaster will act as a boon for the sector.

FICCI has been recommending the creation of a dedicated kids' and animation channel from Doordarshan for several years, and it has been lobbying this initiative at various levels at the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, as well

as with Prasar Bharati and Doordarshan. To this end, FICCI had taken a delegation of industry stakeholders to the CEO, Prasar Bharati, a couple of years ago, and made a presentation for a dedicated kids' channel by Doordarshan. Thus FICCI is delighted by the Hon'ble Minister's announcement, which serves as the culmination of FICCI's constant endeavours in this area.

The benefits of a 'DD Kids' Channel' would be manifold: not only would it be instrumental in catalysing original IP creation for animation and kids' content in the country but also serve as a medium for the dissemination of content that is uniquely Indian in its cultural tropes and ethos. While Indian myths and tales continue to be of interest to children in India today, broadcast content for children and animated shows continue to be largely dominated by foreign-made IPs. In this scenario, the launch of a kids' and animation channel by the national public broadcaster would ensure greater exposure for Indian-made content, which would in turn give a new lease on life to diverse value-based indigenous stories and allow for their packaging in attractive formats that appeal to today's children. The initiative will serve as a reinvigoration of our country's rich cultural heritage and help inculcate quintessentially Indian mores and ethics in the young minds of India – compensating in some measure for the lost art of storytelling in today's nuclear-family-dominant society.

FICCI hopes that appropriate steps will be taken soon by Prasar Bharati and Doordarshan to make the vision of a kids' and animation channel in the public broadcasting space a reality in the very near future.

The Minister has also in the last few weeks spoken on several issues that form part of FICCI's critical recommendations for the growth of the Indian media and entertainment sector – such as the possibility of increasing FDI in news media, the implementation of Phase III & IV of the Digital Access System (DAS) in the given timelines, and the unrestrained programming of news on privately owned FM channels. FICCI wholeheartedly welcomes the Hon'ble Minister's proactive stance and is confident that his able and visionary leadership will lead to the building of the necessary enabling regulatory infrastructure that will help create a world-class entertainment economy for India.

FICCI MEDIA DIVISION