

GOOGLE-RAILTEL COLLABORATION

Dibrugarh 400th railway station to get free WiFi

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GOOGLE AND Railtel Thursday launched free WiFi services at Dibrugarh — the 400th Indian Railway station to benefit from the joint project — marking the completion of what began at a joint announcement by PM Narendra Modi and Google CEO Sundar Pichai at the Google headquarters.

K Suri, director, partnerships, Google India, said the completion of the project before its December deadline was an indication of the effort put in by both Google and Railtel. “Nothing can be better in reaching out to the masses than through existing



railway infrastructure.. which enables us to even reach the hinterlands,” Suri said.

K Manohar Raja, executive director, enterprise business, Railtel said the service reaches out to people from all strata of society as they all use the Indian Railway services. “The idea behind the project was to design a WiFi system that would create a wow experience and the usage we are seeing is a testimony to that.”

What do the numbers say?

- There are about 8 million active users across 400 railway stations in India.
- Two-thirds of the consumers are in the age bracket of 19-34.
- Almost half of the users log back in multiple times of the day
- About 36 per cent users are first time WiFi users
- The average data consumed per user per session is 350 MB (The internet speed slows down after 30 minutes of usage).
- Railway stations in tier II cities see higher data consumption than those in tier I cities.

What next?

Suri says while the free WiFi

service at these 400 railway stations will continue for at least five years — according to the contract — Google India is now looking at expanding its Google Station project by tying up with telcos and ISPs. For Railtel, the project to provide free WiFi to B and C category stations will continue. “We will roll out our services to more stations and talks are underway with new partners,” Raja said, adding that there is also a need for assisted internet, where entrepreneurs will be roped in to help people access internet services. Railtel has Railwire Saathi, which is already working on the project of assisted e-commerce.

(Writer was in Assam on the invitation of Google India)