

Wi-Fi Meri Jaan



DURGESH KUMAR Y

The much-travelled brand guru, **Harish Bijoor**, samples the free Wi-Fi on offer on MG Road for **Bangalore Mirror** and is quite impressed with it

◀ Bijoor checking Wi-Fi connectivity at MG Road Metro station



Bijoor says free Wi-Fi is bliss on MG Road

I will call it that. Wi-Fi Meri Jaan! Wi-Fi is a lifeline for me. Today, the ability to surf the internet and do everything I do on it, seems to be a bit of a birthright. If I don't get Wi-Fi, and more importantly if I don't get my Wi-Fi at the speed of thought, I get churlish. Blame me for being a spoilt brat of the internet age. So many of us are, although we don't want to admit it. Not yet. The internet has spoilt us. I am spoilt and I am not complaining. Not yet.

WHAT'S WI-FI TO ME THEN?

I really do believe that some things must come free on our streets. Air, water and internet for sure. The internet today is a facilitator, a base medium that helps one connect and keep in touch. The internet is both a work and pleasure medium. And if this medium comes free, then life is happening. If God gives free air and is benign for it, the government too is benign for giving free internet. At last! I understand the meaning of what is etched high up on the Vidhana Soudha: "Government's Work Is God's Work".

How was my experience with Free Wi-Fi on MG Road last week then?

Quite nice really. And I am not being patronising. I have sampled Wi-Fi in Istanbul, on the streets of London, Hong Kong, Tokyo and placid old Geneva. This week, I tried it in my good old Bangalore. To be honest, I thought it would be a not-so-good experience, but I was surprised.

I'm likin' it! I went to MG Road and chose a mid-point — the street right outside Barton Centre. I whipped out my iPad and began to connect. A screen popped up asking me for my phone number. I fed that info in, and bingo! I got my passkey and a welcome message from "I-On Namma Wi-Fi"! I hope that means "Internet On Namma Wi-Fi" in full.

I logged on. My passkey gave me a generous validity of three hours. That's nice, because the

best cities in the world offer you less. (Seoul and Copenhagen — 30 minutes; London — one hour; Hong Kong — 55 minutes). Maybe the speeds are so blazing-speed experiences that an hour is like a lifetime there. And now I am being "not nice".

The speed I enjoyed on MG Road was not bad at all (it took me four minutes to download a presentation from my server). However, I would want better. I have tasted better speeds in the past on the streets of Seoul. But what in tarnation! Be patient. Seoul is possibly the gold standard of public Wi-Fi networks. Things will improve for sure. What made up for the speed was the courtesy message at the bottom of my SMS that says, "Courtesy Dept. of IT, BT, Sand T, GoK and Karnataka ICT Group". That's a mouthful of abbreviations to the uninitiated tourist, but what the hell, s/he shouldn't care where it all comes from. Free Internet on the street is manna from heaven as far as I am concerned. In a world where there are no free lunches, this is bliss on good old MG Road.

Now, I would like to get demanding. I want this everywhere. I want Wi-Fi in Chikpet and Chamrajpet, just as I want it on Borewell Road



Bijoor started the test drive at Barton Centre

◀ Bangalore sure does deserve the status of a 100 per cent Wi-Fi city. It is a great way of touting the city as a tech-friendly city

and HSR Layout. Today, we live a life that is connected by the virtual. And the lifeline that connects the virtual to all of us is the internet.

Bangalore sure does deserve the status of a 100 per cent Wi-Fi city. It is a great way of touting the city as a tech-friendly city. A great way to position 'Brand Bangalore' to the world. Yes dear tourist, we cannot offer you nightlife that lasts beyond the 11.30 pm deadline, but so what, we offer you seamless internet connectivity on all our streets. If you can't eat bread, eat cake. That surely will be a big first step in positioning the city right to the external audience that visits Bangalore by day and flees by night. The second step would be when all our public transport will carry Wi-Fi free.

And finally, what have I done with Wi-Fi across the world? Here is a small list and a quick rating:

- 1. Seoul:** Downloaded a full movie on the street, downloaded 16 recipes of Mangalorean fish and prawn and chicken for a Korean friend and got to answer all my mails in a jiffy, all in about 20 minutes flat.
- 2. Hong Kong:** Downloaded all Season-5 episodes of *Two and a Half Men*, watched Arnab

Goswami on *Times Now Live*, and answered all my many mails leaning against a wall, all in less than 45 minutes.

3. London: Bought theatre tickets at the West End in a jiffy and answered all my many, many mails in some 20 minutes.

4. Tokyo, Istanbul, Taipei, and Johannesburg: I really don't remember what I did there, but just remember feeling very, very happy. I am a true-blue Indian, and love it when I get something free on the streets. And when I get the internet free on the streets, I love it even more! Two things I love: Free and Internet! I love you now MG Road! It's your turn!

The author is brand-strategy specialist & CEO, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc. Feedback on twitter @harishbijoor

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