

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:518

ANSWERED ON:29.04.2015

NET NEUTRALITY

Lekhi Smt. Meenakashi;Tharoor Dr. Shashi

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of concept of net neutrality and Government's views/stand over it;
- (b) the prevalent practice of internet neutrality across the globe;
- (c) whether a few telecom companies in India have resorted to marketing techniques that involve differential pricing to access certain online content, applications and other Over-The-Top-(OTT) services, thus, violating the basic principle of net neutrality and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has brought out a consultation paper to prepare a framework for Net Neutrality/Over-The-Top (OTT) services and sought comments from the stakeholders and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the measures taken/being taken by the Government to maintain net neutrality?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 518 FOR 29th APRIL, 2015 REGARDING "NET NEUTRALITY".

(a) Net- Neutrality concept refers to non-discrimination of data packets by intermediate network of Internet on the basis of content, application, service, device, sender or recipient address etc.

Government notes with assurance the growth of Internet in India and wide platform it has offered for innovation, investment and creativity. Government strives for non discriminatory access to Internet for all citizens of the country.

The issues related to Net Neutrality are in consultation phase at present.

(b) There is divergence of viewpoints amongst nations on the extent of neutrality desired from Internet Service Providers (ISPs) & regulatory measures undertaken to enforce them. Very few countries have opted for specific legislations in this regard.

(c) As per the existing tariff framework, tariff for telecommunication service is under forbearance except for National Roaming, Rural Fixed Line Services and leased circuits. The service providers have the flexibility to offer various combinations of tariff to different classes of subscribers provided that such classification is not arbitrary. Tariffs are offered by service providers taking into account several factors including input costs, level of competition and other commercial considerations. Presently, the service providers are offering Internet packs, which allow the subscribers to use any content, applications etc. available on Internet. In addition, some service providers are offering discounted special tariff packs for certain applications.

(d) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released a consultation paper on "Regulatory Framework for Over-The-Top (OTT) Service" on 27.03.2015. The paper invites comments from stakeholders by 24.04.2015 & counter comments by 08.05.2015. The consultation paper is available on TRAI website www.traigov.in.

(e) TRAI has released a consultation paper on "Regulatory Framework for Over-the-top services" on 27.03.2015 for inviting comments from various stakeholders.

Department of Telecommunications has constituted a committee on Net Neutrality in January, 2015 itself with following terms of reference:

1. The Government will take final decision in the light of reports above.
2. To examine the pursuit of net neutrality from a public policy objective, its advantages and limitations.

3. To examine the economic impact on the telecom Sector that arises from the existence of a regulated telecom services sector and unregulated content and applications sector, including over-the-top (OTT) services.
4. To examine, assess and specify qualifications on the applicability of the principal of net-neutrality from the security, traffic management, economic, privacy and other stand-points.
5. To recommend overall policy, regulatory and technical responses in the light of examination and assessment of the issues in the first three terms of reference.