

NET NEUTRALITY

- The Internet has spread all over the world, so widely that many believe it is now an essential good. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has come out in strong support of Net neutrality. TRAI said, internet service providers should not engage in any discriminatory treatment of content. The regulator seeks to bar any practice where selected content is blocked, degraded, slowed down or granted preferential speeds.

What does Net Neutrality mean?

- Net neutrality is **“The principle that Internet service providers should enable access to all content and applications without favouring or blocking particular websites. Basically, the ethos of net neutrality state that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should not give preference to certain content over the other”**.

Background

- Last year, the TRAI had ruled for Net Neutrality thus banning Facebook's Free Basics and Airtel Zero. Both Free Basics and Airtel Zero let users access certain apps and websites for free.

TRAI's Recommendations

Prohibits Discrimination:

- Keeping Internet open and prohibits any ISPs from discrimination on basis of content.

Protection of rights of citizens

- The internet use should be facilitated by ensuring plurality and diversity of views, opinions and ideas.

Exemptions

- It excludes specialized services and content delivery networks (CDNs) from scope of any rules on net neutrality.

Setting up Multi-stakeholder body

- Setting up a multi-stakeholder body to monitor and investigate whether ISPs are adhering to rules.

Significance of TRAI's Recommendations

1. The telecom regulator's support for Net neutrality fulfils constitutional promises Preserving the democracy of the internet and users' right to freedom of speech and expression
2. It will ensure a level playing field for services providers to innovate and customize in India
3. It will help build the Internet as a public platform with open access to all
4. It will effectively address the problem of anti-competitive practices adopted by certain providers.
5. Judicious and transparent use of national resources for greater public benefit.
6. The decision based on wide public consultation affirms the government's stand for people's participation in decision making.

Arguments supporting Net Neutrality

- Services on the internet must be equally accessible to all and telecom operators cannot discriminate between services.
- It will end discrimination against innovative internet platforms and application service providers who do not have the financial wherewithal
- Without Net neutrality, the new start-ups would be at a disadvantage vis a vis established players.
- Without Net neutrality it would impact both the right to speak and the ability to receive knowledge, hence impacting our right to freedom of speech and expression.

EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY - BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

12/24, Muthurangan Muthali St, West Tambaram, Chennai - 600045

<https://www.evastalinasacademy.in/>

Contact Number - +91-8678969915, +91-9940332851

- It would be detrimental from the consumer point of view as their usage pattern will be controlled by the telecom companies.
- While voice revenues have shown a decline, data revenues have shown significant growth for telecom companies.

Arguments against Net Neutrality

- Applications which use the voice over internet protocol (VoIP), have led to reduction in voice-based traffic, putting inordinate pressure on telcos'
- Differential pricing recognises the economic principle of paying differently for different levels of service and experience.
- ISPs say differential pricing based on differential levels of service will enable them to recover the massive investment made.
- If net neutrality is enforced, then future investments in telecommunications infrastructure will be curtailed, thereby impacting user experience.
- It will impact the government's ambitious Digital India initiative

Way Forward

- A proper mechanism needs to be instituted to make sure that the exceptions are not used as loopholes by the big Internet players.
- To make the digital economy a reality telcos' must make adequate investments to cater to the explosion of data traffic.