

Multi-stakeholder Body for Net Neutrality

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In News: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India recommended the creation of a multi-stakeholder body (MSB) to ensure that Internet access providers adhere to the provisions of net neutrality.

About Multi-Stakeholder Body (MSB)

- The MSB should be set up as a non-profit entity.
- Roles and Responsibilities:
 - To provide advice and support to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in the monitoring and enforcement of net neutrality principles.
 - To investigate complaints regarding the violation of net neutrality.
 - To help DoT in the maintenance of a repository of reasonable traffic management practices.
- Stakeholders:
 - It could include telecom service providers, Internet service providers, content providers, researchers, academic and technical community, civil society organisations, and the government.

What is Net Neutrality ?

- The concept of net neutrality is that all data on the internet should be treated equally by internet service providers, and governments, regardless of content, user, platform, application or device.
- All ISPs providers should have equal access to all data on the net speed to all traffic.
- All websites or applications should be treated equally by TSPs
- All applications should be allowed to be accessed at the

same internet speed

- All applications should be accessible for the same cost.

History of India fight for Net Neutrality ?

- Telecom operator Airtel was forced to withdraw a plan to charge extra for internet calls, and shut down a platform called Airtel Zero, which allowed customers to access a few mobile applications for free.
- Some operators call this “toll-free data”, but it’s popularly known as zero rating.
- Others, including Facebook and Google, were also forced to abandon their zero-rating platforms and deals.
- The most visible casualty was Facebook’s Free Basics service, which offered Indians free access to a limited number of websites.
- March 2015, the telecom regulator published a paper on net neutrality, triggering a million emails from the public

Net Neutrality in India: The DoT accepts TRAI’s recommendations in favour of net neutrality which

- Bars telcos from discriminatory treatment on the web, based on content, sender, receiver, protocols or equipment.
- Penalties for violation of license rules on net neutrality.
- Includes exceptions for critical services such as remote healthcare diagnostics, self-driving cars, etc.
- Exempts content delivery networks, which do not use public Internet from open web rules.
- Applies equally to 5G technology as well because the principles are technology-neutral.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was, thus, established with effect from 20th February 1997 by

an Act of Parliament, called the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.

- To regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
- It's mission is to create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in the country in a manner and at a pace which will enable India to play a leading role in emerging global information society.
- To provide a fair and transparent policy environment which promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition.
- Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.