

Centre upholds Net neutrality

A separate committee has been set up under the DoT to examine what these critical services will be. These may include autonomous vehicles, digital healthcare services or disaster management. The regulator, in November 2017, batted in favour of Net neutrality.

The regulator had said, "Internet access services should be governed by a principle that restricts any form of discrimination or interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content."

This principle, it had added, would apply to any discriminatory treatment based on the sender or receiver, the network protocols, or the user equipment, but not to specialised services or other exclusions. It had also said that these would not apply to "reasonable traffic management practices" by the service provider. India's decision to uphold Net neutrality assumes greater significance given that in the U.S., the rules on Net neutrality were repealed. The decision, which came into effect in June, paves the way for service providers to block or slow down access to particular content for users.

To implement Net neutrality, the regulator had recommended that the terms of licence agreements that govern the provision of Internet services in India be amended "to incorporate the principles of non-discriminatory treatment of content along with the appropriate exclusions and exceptions." The regulator has recommended establishing a multi-stakeholder not-for-profit body for the monitoring and enforcement of the principles. Besides, the Telecom Commission also gave its approval to the new digital communications policy 2018 (new telecom policy), which will now be sent for Cabinet approval.

The policy, unveiled in May this year, aims to attract \$100 billion investments into the country's digital communications sector, provide broadband access for all with 50 mbps speed and create 40 lakh new jobs in the sector by 2022.

The Commission also gave its nod to install 12.5 lakh Wi-Fi hotspots in all gram panchayats.

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