Computer Society of India

Response to TRAI Consultation Paper on Differential Pricing for Data Services

A meaningful input from India's oldest and largest IT Professional Body.

5 January 2016

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Preamble

The Technical Advisory Group **(TAG)** of the Computer Society of India(CSI) comprises of experts from among CSI Fellows, CSI Capacity Building Task Force and selected representatives from Industry, Academy, Research and Training organisations and Computer users at large that are CSI members.

TAG was assigned the task of studying the TRAI 'Consultation Paper on the Differential Pricing for Data Services'. Further, they were asked to report on the Impact of 'Free Basic' on IT Community in case it was ever implemented.

TAG confined its research and study strictly on the merits and demerits of compromising on Net Neutrality.

Their findings are presented in the pages that follow.

InterNet Facts:- CSI Observations

1. India has already achieved 354 Million InterNet Connections of which 213 Million are Mobile InterNet connections. Net Connectivity in India is second only to China

2. InterNet usage is growing steadily and its growth is directly related to fibre optic cable network.

3. There is no data available to prove that cost of usage is the main delaying factor in growth as compared to limitation in connectivity.

4. India's InterNet usage charge is among the most affordable in the world. Affordability has never been a major growth deterrent.

5. In our understanding, free accessibility to the InterNet did not originate from Indian users but it is a creation of a section of the industry.

6. While InterNet providers may offer differential rates and services, access to legally permitted content is available without restriction or limitation.

7. E-Governance centric Citizen services, banking, and e-commerce facilities over the Net are persuading new users to subscribe.

8. Knowledge upgrade, e-learning, virtual classes, online test and certifications, research and many OTT services open to choice without restrictions.

9. All InterNet providers have a level playing field.

Net Neutrality:- CSI Recommendation

1. Free Basics, proposed by Facebook will result in the public losing free access to contents of choice onInternet.

2. Facebook will determine what is a basic service. If the proposal of Facebook is implemented, the public will have access only to Facebook and its partners. Other services will be either not available or will become expensive, as someone has to be pay for the free service. Because of these reasons, Free Basics, offered by Facebook, is not acceptable.

3. Facebook will also have access to the data of a large number of Indian citizens. They promise to keep it only for 90 days; but 90 days is a long time in this digital era. There is also no guarantee that they will not keep it with them in some condensed or digested form.

4. Providing access to the data of a large number of our citizens to foreign company is as serious as the problem reported in the first paragraph.

5. It is not that we are against the access to Internet. As a matter of fact, we believe that the basic Internet access should be made available to everyone free of cost; and it should be provided by an instrument of the state. We need protocols that allow different service providers to plug into this free Internet and provide their offers, possibly at different costs and at different speeds, with or without advertisements. This will allow the public to pick and choose what they want at whatever cost they are ready to pay.

6. The Computer Society of India supports Net Neutrality. Being the largest professional body of IT professional in the country, CSI with 71 Chapters and 540 Student branches represents a large number of ofInterNet users and voice their collective views and opinions on matters that affect IT community.

About CSI:

1. Through its 71 CSI-Chapters and 540 CSI-Student-Branches in AICTE accredited Technical Colleges spread all over India, CSI conducts training and workshops, seminars and conferences on a regular basis.

2. Being the largest Not-for-Profit IT professional Society in India, CSI's mission is to empower every citizen to be Net-savvy, and upgrade IT expertise of professionals on a continuous basis and to support research and innovation.

3. From its inception in 1965, CSI has been supplementing the Capacity Building activities of the Government using its large pool of professional body of technical experts.

4. CSI's direct or online training services, mostly free or at affordable costs are of benefit to the poorest of the poor and in the remotest destinations within our country.

5. CSI also support Start-ups through its 'Germinate' activities and offers advisory services on IT related topics to Industry and Government

Computer Society of India

Unit No: 3, IV Floor, Samruddhi Venture Park,

MIDC, Andheri (East), Mumbai – 400 093

Tel: +91-22-2823-5476 / 2823 5548