Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) Scheme

Prelims: Current events of National and International importance | Governance

Why in News?

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recently prescribed a cap on tariffs charged to Public Data Offices (PDOs) under the PM-WANI scheme.

- **Aim** - To accelerate the proliferation of internet services by setting up ***public Wi-Fi hotspots in the country***, especially in rural areas.
- **Launched by -** Department of Telecommunication in December 2020.
- Through better access to public hotspots, it aims to increase employment for small and micro-entrepreneurs and provide low-cost internet to the underserved urban poor and rural households.
- The scheme encourages local shops and establishments to provide Wi-Fi for last-mile internet delivery, which ***does not require a licence or charge a registration fee.***
- **Accessibility -** To access public hotspots under PM-WANI scheme one needs to download a relevant App which shows the available networks.
- The user can then choose from a list of available connections and make a payment to use the network.
- The user can access the network till his/her balance is exhausted.
- **PM-WANI ecosystem –** It consists of four parts - Public Data Office (PDO), Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA), App Provider, and Central Registry.
- PDO establishes the Wi-Fi Hotspots and provides internet access to users.
- PDOA provides authorisation and accounting services to PDOs.
- The app provider displays the available hotspots in the phone's proximity.
- The central registry overseen by the Centre for Development of Telematics maintains details of App Providers, PDOs, and PDOAs.
- **Benefits of PM-WANI -** WANI Wi-Fi architecture can lead to enhanced internet penetration which could lead to an increase in gross domestic product.
- It can scale up internet access in rural areas, thereby narrowing the digital divide.
- Can generate jobs in small- and medium-scale sectors.
- Could provide affordable internet access to the mass underserved section of society and help boost digital India.
- **Recent Framework** - TRAI prescribed a cap on tariffs charged to PDOs, to keep public Wi-Fi affordable, providing reasonable compensation for the broadband connection to service providers.
- The proposed tariff framework takes into account prevailing market scenario, current levels of adoption of PM-WANI services, as well as potential future growth.

Reference

[The Hindu Business Line | PM -WANI Scheme]