

## TRAI in Support of Net Neutrality

Click [here](#) to know about Net Neutrality.

\n\n

### Why in news?

\n\n

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recently rolled out a series of recommendations in strong support of Net neutrality.

\n\n

### What are the major recommendations?

\n\n

\n

- **Discrimination** - Service providers are restricted from entering into any arrangement that has the effect of discriminatory treatment in Internet access.

\n

- The discrimination should not be based on the content, sender or receiver, protocols being used, or user equipment being deployed.

\n

- Any “discriminatory treatment” including blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds is restricted.

\n

- **Content** - Non-discriminatory treatment applies specifically to ‘Internet Access Services’ which are generally available to the public.

\n

- The content mentioned includes applications, services and any other data, including its end-point information.

\n

- **Monitoring** - TRAI has recommended the establishment of a collaborative mechanism in the form of a multi-stakeholder body.

\n

- This would be responsible for developing technical standards for monitoring violations and enforcement of the principles.

\n

\n\n

## What is the significance?

\n\n

- \n
- Internet has become a basic infrastructure and an egalitarian platform that advances the free speech rights of citizens.
- \n
- The recommendations have thus upheld the democratic principles of the country by granting the freedom and choice of access for the end users.
- \n
- TRAI has also taken the leadership position globally in ensuring that access to internet remains non-discriminatory.
- \n
- This is especially given that many other telecom regulators including that of the US have faltered in ensuring equality in cyberspace.
- \n

\n\n

## What are the shortfalls and solutions?

\n\n

- \n
- **Special Services** - A communications network connecting hospitals may rightly be classified as a specialised service.
- \n
- The operators may have to ensure a higher grade of service for these kinds of areas compared to the mass internet.
- \n
- TRAI has excluded specialised services from the purview of net neutrality but without specifying what falls under this category.
- \n
- This could be a cause of concern given that the operators can exploit policy loopholes.
- \n
- E.g. a telecom operator could enter into private deals with a healthcare mobile application provider to get unfair access to users.
- \n
- TRAI should have set up a monitoring platform to ensure that telecom companies make adequate disclosures about such specialised services.
- \n
- **Traffic management** - TRAI has also allowed telecom companies to carry out reasonable traffic management practices, for delivering internet traffic.

\n

- Traffic management practices such as those used for protecting network security are legitimate, but it can also lead to discriminatory practices.

\n

- TRAI could have specified what type of traffic management is allowed automatically, and which ones need approval.

\n

- **Enforcement** - TRAI has failed to put in place a neutral enforcement body.

\n

- The multi-stakeholder body led by industry, as proposed by TRAI, may not be enough to ensure implementation of net neutrality, exceptions and transparency measures.

\n

- This is because the industry-led bodies have seldom protected the rights of consumers in the past.

\n

- **Besides**, the regulations are criticised to be unnecessarily bureaucratic and not conducive for the ease of doing business.

\n

- The Department of Telecom, while accepting the regulator's overall recommendations, should also iron out these concerns.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: BusinessLine**

\n

