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D. O. No. **21M-134/2015-62/CM**

BHUBANESWAR

Dated **18.04.2015**

Dear Sir: KL-11-11 j.

Sub: An appeal to safeguard the basic principles of Net Neutrality.

I write this letter to you in connection with the consultation paper that has been recently opened by TRAI on the subject of Internet services and network neutrality. This subject has become one of great concern to all citizens of India.

The IT sector is today at the top of the State Government's agenda and Odisha has been in the forefront of the IT revolution in the country. It is a matter of pride that the growth rate of IT exports from the State is more than the national growth rate for the past many years. Bhubaneswar is the hub of IT growth with Special Economic Zones coming up at Info City and Info Valley while a green field electronics manufacturing cluster is also being set up. The State Government is also implementing a number of e-governance projects including 'Digital India'. The internet forms the crux of our upcoming projects in this sector and therefore, I am concerned about the basic principles of this medium.

I have been following the Net Neutrality debate since the past week closely. Many citizens have even written letters to you reiterating their stand about the matter. It is important to stress on the stand of State Govt. and our party Biju Janata Dal regarding the issue and TRAI should also treat this issue with the nuanced attention that it deserves. The growth of the internet is going to affect each and every one of us especially the young and dynamic population of this country.

It must be pointed out that this is not an issue of just the elite as it is being made out to be. It will affect even the poor because so many services are delivered over the internet today. The Government is trying to extend its services to the people through this medium because it will be effective and inexpensive. Therefore, I do not agree with the thought that this is a compartment meant for the elite only. Present usage of the net seems to encompass everyone, rich or poor, particularly the younger people.

In the ongoing debate, it is noticed that there is wrong usage of the word 'free'. The word 'free' should not be confused with the word 'freedom'. While presently the youth of this country is paying a very high cost for an inefficient net connection, I do not see any justification in limiting the ability of new start-up companies to reach the net user. Nor do I feel that there should be compulsions on the users by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to use particular Apps for reasons best known to them. Let us remember that the Internet is not the market-place but the market is made inside the internet.

While the under-privileged deserve much more than what is available, nobody should decide what exactly are their requirements. But if you dictate what the poor should get, you take away their rights to choose what they think is best for them. You cannot force a person to use a certain mobile application because the telecom company believes that it should be doing so.

We, therefore, would be wary of any future where equal and non-discriminatory access to the growth engine of the Internet would be altered – and which is why I strongly believe that the principle of net neutrality must be protected. Digital India requires that we help ensure that the innovation and entrepreneurship made possible by a dynamic Internet is further encouraged and not allowed to be influenced by discriminatory practices.

We must ensure that access to the Internet for an Indian citizen anywhere in our nation means un-throttled equal access to the full spectrum of the open World Wide Web in practice. This is especially important since the Internet is key to the unparalleled ability to exercise the right to access knowledge and free expression which are

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empowering our younger generations to drive India to the forefront of the 21st Century.

In order to achieve this, TRAI, in collaboration with the Department of Telecommunication, needs to urgently come out with measures to protect network neutrality. In addition, TRAI needs to ensure that it does not favour regressive measures such as licensing online services. My Government and party representatives have repeatedly stood in favour of the position that India requires progressive IT laws. Measures to be taken should recognize that legitimate and limited regulation should not turn into over-regulation. Other measures which cater to the aspirations of young Indians to create a modern and internet enabled society must be assisted. This will only be possible by an open internet that can reach out to the poorest of the poor and help change their lives.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(NAVEEN PATNAIK)

SHRI RAHUL KHULLAR,
Chairman,
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India,
New Delhi.