



## Multi-stakeholder Body for Net Neutrality

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India** (TRAI) has recommended the creation of a **multi-stakeholder body** (MSB) to ensure that Internet access providers adhere to the provisions of **net neutrality**.

The MSB should be set up as a **non-profit entity**.

### Key Points

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- **Roles and Responsibilities:**

- To provide **advice and support to the Department of Telecommunications** (DoT) in the monitoring and enforcement of net neutrality principles.
- To **investigate complaints** regarding the violation of net neutrality.
- To help DoT in the **maintenance of a repository of reasonable traffic management** practices.

- **Stakeholders:**

It could include telecom service providers, Internet service providers, content providers, researchers, academic and technical community, civil society organisations, and the government.

- **Net Neutrality in India:** The DoT accepts **TRAI's recommendations in favour of net neutrality** which:

- **Bars telcos from discriminatory treatment** on the web, based on content, sender, receiver, protocols or equipment.
- **Penalises for violation of license rules** on net neutrality.
- **Includes exceptions for critical services** such as remote healthcare diagnostics, self-driving cars, etc.
- **Exempts content delivery networks**, which do not use public Internet from open web rules.
- **Applies equally to 5G technology** as well because the principles are technology-neutral.

## Net Neutrality

- Net neutrality has been defined as a principle that **Internet Service Providers (ISP)** also called **Internet Access Providers (IAP)** should **enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favouring or blocking particular products or websites.**
- This means when the **customers pay an ISP for a data plan, they should be able to access all content online** (news, social media, videos, games, etc.) at the **same broadband speed** which they had opted for.
- **Arguments in Favour:**
  - It **democratises the internet space** as the telecom provider cannot charge differently for different websites and allows everyone on the internet to participate in it.
  - It **does not let ISPs to act as “gatekeepers”** and control, filter or block data according to their will without a court order.
  - It **provides a level playing field** to all the big and small companies in the Information Technology (IT) sector and does not let a handful of companies control the internet.
  - It **ensures that all people and websites have equal access** to each other, regardless of their ability to pay hence fosters the principle of freedom of speech.
- **Arguments Against:**
  - It will **stifle innovation** on the internet as it will **not be possible to explore consumer choices** and create content accordingly.
  - ISPs will **not be able to make an investment in Broadband** services.
  - It will **kill competition as every data packet will be treated the same** and content providers will not get a chance to advance their data at a better rate by paying the telecom providers.

A QUICK REMINDER

# What is net neutrality?

All traffic on the internet should be treated equally.

## NO BLOCKING

Your internet access provider (IAP) cannot block you from accessing legal content of your choice.

## NO THROTTLING

Your IAP cannot intentionally throttle legal internet traffic to slower speeds than other traffic.

## NO PAID PRIORITIZATION

Your IAP cannot sell 'fast lane' service to content providers who can pay more than others.



Source: TH