



PM-WANI Scheme

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Why in News?

The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** has prescribed a **cap on tariffs charged to Public Data Offices (PDOs)** under the **PM-WANI scheme**, in order to keep public **Wi-Fi affordable**, while also providing **reasonable compensation for the broadband connection to service providers**.

- TRAI has mandated that **Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)** cannot charge PDOs more than twice the retail broadband tariff for plans up to 200 Mbps.

What is the PM-WANI Scheme?

- **About:** The [Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface \(PM-WANI\)](#), launched by the [Department of Telecommunications \(DoT\)](#) in **2020**, aims to **expand the availability of public Wi-Fi hotspots across India**, with a focus on **strengthening digital communication infrastructure in rural and underserved areas**.
 - The scheme is designed to **provide affordable internet access to the urban poor and rural population while boosting employment for small and micro-entrepreneurs** through the establishment of Wi-Fi service outlets, supporting the goals of the [National Digital Communications Policy, 2018](#).
- **Access Mechanism:** Users can access PM-WANI services by **downloading the PM Wani application in the mobile phone**, selecting a listed hotspot, and making a **digital payment to use the internet**.
- **PM-WANI Ecosystem:** The scheme comprises 4 key stakeholders:
 - **Public Data Office (PDO):** Sets up Wi-Fi hotspots and provides internet services to users.
 - **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** Facilitates **authentication, accounting**, and aggregation of multiple PDOs.
 - **App Provider:** Develops and manages mobile applications that show accessible Wi-Fi hotspots.
 - **Central Registry:** Maintained by the [Centre for Development of Telematics \(C-DoT\)](#), it holds records of all PDOs, PDOAs, and App Providers.
 - Established in **1984**, **C-DoT** is an **autonomous telecom R&D centre under the DoT**. It functions as a **registered society** under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.

PM-WANI ECOSYSTEM



▪ Key Features:

- **No licence or registration fee** required for Public Data Offices (PDOs), promoting participation by small vendors and entrepreneurs.
- **Utilises local infrastructure** (e.g., shops, kirana stores, tea stalls) to enable last-mile internet connectivity.

▪ Key Benefits:

- Enhances **digital inclusion** and narrows the **urban-rural digital divide**.
- Facilitates **affordable internet access** and supports the **Digital India** mission.
- Stimulates **employment generation** in the informal sector through entrepreneurship.
- Improved internet access can contribute to **GDP growth** by enabling digital services in **education, health, governance, and commerce**.

What are the Government Initiatives for Enhancing Broadband Connectivity?

- **National Broadband Mission (NBM)**: It is a flagship initiative to **expand and strengthen digital infrastructure** across India.
 - **National Broadband Mission (NBM 1.0)** launched in **2019** focused on **expanding broadband access to all villages** by 2022 and **fiberizing existing telecom towers to enhance connectivity**.
 - **National Broadband Mission 2.0 (2025-30)** builds on the achievements of **NBM 1.0** and aims to **accelerate India's digital transformation**, strengthen digital infrastructure, and enhance global competitiveness.
- **Gati Shakti Sanchar Portal**: **Gati Shakti Sanchar Portal** was launched in **2022** to streamline the approval process for laying **Optical Fiber Cable (OFC)** and installing telecom infrastructure.
- **Telecommunications Act, 2023 & Right of Way Rules, 2024**: **Telecommunications Act, 2023** & **Right of Way Rules, 2024** aims to **simplify and expedite the deployment of broadband infrastructure** across the country.
- **Amended BharatNet Program (2023)**: **Amended BharatNet Program** aims to **provide optical fiber (OF) connectivity to 2.64 lakh GPs in ring topology** (a network design where connected devices form a circular data channel) and **OF connectivity to non-GP villages on demand**.
 - It focuses on **remote and underserved areas**, including the **North-East, Islands, LWE-affected regions, Aspirational Districts, and border villages**.
- **Submarine OFC Connectivity**: High-speed connectivity has been extended to island territories through the laying of **submarine optical fiber cables** between **Chennai-Andaman & Nicobar Islands** and **Kochi-Lakshadweep**, enhancing digital access in coastal and remote regions.
 - As of May 2025, the **Submarine OFC project** connecting **Chennai to Port Blair and other islands of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands** is **fully operational**, with current bandwidth utilization at 243.31 Gbps.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

- **About:** The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** is an **independent statutory body** established in **1997** under **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997** to **regulate the telecommunications sector in India**
- **Composition:** Comprises a Chairperson, not more than two whole-time Members, and not more than two part-time Members.
- **Key Functions:**
 - **Regulate telecom services**, including **tariff fixation and revision**.
 - **Ensure quality of service, fair competition**, and **consumer protection**.
 - **Promote transparency and efficiency** in telecom operations.
 - **Advise the Government** on policy and licensing matters in telecom and broadcasting (recommendations are **advisory**, not binding).
 - **Foster a level playing field** and issue **regulations** to ensure orderly sectoral growth and India's global digital competitiveness.
- **Appellate Authority:**
 - An amendment to the **TRAI Act**, effective from **24th January 2000**, led to the establishment of the **Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** to handle **adjudicatory and dispute resolution functions**, which were earlier under the purview of TRAI, thereby separating regulatory and judicial roles.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following: (2022)

1. Aarogya Setu
2. CoWIN
3. DigiLocker
4. DIKSHA

Which of the above are built on top of open-source digital platforms?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (d)