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Title: The Minister of Communication and Information Technology made a statement Correcting the reply to Starred Question No. 518 given on 29th April, 2015 by Shashi Tharoor and Smt. --- MPs regarding 'Net neutrality'.

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): I beg to make a statement to correct the reply of part (e) of Starred Question No. 518 (Hindi & English versions) answered on 29.04.2015, regarding "Net Neutrality". The statement along with corrected version of reply of above said question is laid on the Table of the House. The inconvenience caused due to inadvertent mistake is regretted.

(a) Net-Neutrality concept refers to non-discrimination of data packets by intermediate network of Internet on the basis of content, application, service, device, sender or recipient address etc.

Government notes with assurance the growth of internet in India and wide platform it has offered for innovation, investment and creativity. Government strives for non discriminatory access to Internet for all citizens of the country.

The issues related to Net Neutrality are in consultation phase at present.

(b) There is divergence of viewpoints amongst nations on the extent of neutrality desired from Internet Service Providers (ISPs) & regulatory measures undertaken to enforce them. Very few countries have opted for specific legislation in this regard.

(c) As per the existing tariff framework, tariff for telecommunication service is under forbearance except for National Roaming, Rural Fixed Line Services and leased circuits. The service providers have the flexibility to offer various combinations of tariff to different classes of subscribers provided that such classification is not arbitrary. Tariffs are offered by service providers taking into account several factors including input costs, level of competition and other commercial considerations. Presently, the service providers are offering Internet packs, which allow the subscribers to use any content, applications etc. available on Internet. In addition, some service providers are offering discounted special tariff packs for certain applications.

(d) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released a consultation paper on "Regulatory Framework for Over-The-Top (OTT) Service" on 27.03.2015. The paper invites comments from stakeholders by 24.04.2015 and counter comments by 08.05.2015. The consultation paper is available on TRAI website www.trai.gov.in.

(e) TRAI has released a consultation paper on "Regulatory Framework for Over-The-Top Services" on 27.03.2015 for inviting comments from various stakeholders.

Department of Telecommunications has constituted a committee on Net Neutrality in January, 2015 itself with following terms of reference.

1. To examine the pursuit of net neutrality from public policy objective, its advantages and limitations.
2. To examine the economic impact on the telecom sector that arises from the existence of a regulated telecom services sector and unregulated content and applications sector, including Over-The-Top (OTT) services.
3. To examine, assess and specify qualifications on the applicability of the principle of net-neutrality from the security, traffic management, economic, privacy and other stand-points.
4. To recommend overall policy, regulatory and technical responses in the light of examination and assessment of the issues in the first three terms of reference.

The Government will take final decision in the light of reports above.