

The Telecom Commission has approved the National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) and the net neutrality recommendations among other proposals. The NDCP will now be taken to the Cabinet for final approval.

The NDCP is aimed at creating new jobs and garnering investments to the tune of \$100 billion by 2022. The policy was open for stakeholder comments till May end and more than 1,000 comments were received by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). The DoT reached this decision upon reviewing the views from different stakeholders.

The Telecom Commission also approved the recommendations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on net neutrality. The TRAI had in its recommendations backed principles of a free and open internet and prohibited discriminatory treatment of content and practices such as blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content. However, TRAI had allowed fast lanes for specialised services outlined by the DoT and permitted telcos to use traffic management practices to ensure quality of service. Also, content delivery networks had been kept out of the ambit of net neutrality.

The new policy comes at a time of when the sector is burdened with a debt of nearly 5-7 trillion amid hyper competition. Revenue and profitability of operators have declined with the number of player reducing to three due to the ongoing consolidation.

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