



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)
21st Congress
Samar Mukherjee Nagar
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Resolution

Oppose Violations of Net Neutrality and Enclosure of the Internet

The 21st Party Congress of the CPI(M) supports the ongoing struggle for net neutrality and strongly opposes the efforts of telecom companies to violate net neutrality. It criticises the so-called consultation document published by TRAI, a document that supports the interests of telecom companies and internet monopolies against the people.

The Internet is becoming more and more important in people's lives – as a source of knowledge, a means of communication, and as the vehicle for all forms of media. This has led to the demand that the internet be declared a public utility and for the opposition to violations of net neutrality.

Net Neutrality is the principle in which all web based services or websites have to be treated equally by the network operator (telecom companies). Otherwise, telecom companies can offer either a limited internet consisting of only a few services and websites pretending it is the whole internet; or speed up or slow down the sites and services, based on who pays them and how much.

Neutrality over the internet has facilitated democratic collaboration of technology, content, communication and advanced innovations. It has allowed anybody to put up a website or offer a service. The violation of net neutrality defeats such advances. A number of telecom companies, such as Airtel and Reliance, along with some internet companies, offer “special packages” that will do just that. They bundle only a few web sites and applications with their services, pretending that this limited internet is the whole internet. Such cartels between the telecom companies and a few global internet monopolies will lead to further concentration of economic power on the internet. It will mean marginalising innovations and most of the progressive media, forcing them onto the platform of global internet monopolies. Under such conditions, only well-heeled companies and the rich will be able to offer content and services through the internet.

The telecom companies argue that they need more money to build infrastructure and meet the demand of new internet based services. Hence, they claim, they need to violate net neutrality. What the telecom companies do not disclose is that the revenues from their data services are growing rapidly -- and by 100 per cent in 2014 alone -- and are more than sufficient to build additional infrastructure. Violating net neutrality, as TRAI has proposed, will only provide telecom companies a perverse incentive not to expand their infrastructure. The more the scarcity, the more the money they can extract from internet service-providers and websites.

People all over the world are fighting this unholy nexus between telecom and internet companies to fence in the internet. The Competition Commission in India has begun investigations into telecom companies for violating net neutrality. But the telecom regulator, TRAI, has put out a consultation document that blatantly supports telecom companies in tying up with major internet companies to violate net neutrality.

The 21st Congress of the CPI(M) calls on the people to defeat all such attempts to violate net neutrality and limit people's access to the Internet. It also calls on the Government and the regulator to define the internet as a public utility.
