To
Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

Copy to
Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad
Minister of Communications and Information Technology

Copy to
Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman
Minister of State for Commerce and Industry

Copy to
Shri Rahul Khullar
Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

Dated: April 24, 2015
Subject: **Protect and Promote the Open Internet in India**

Dear Sir,

We are writing to you as founders of Indian internet-enabled start-ups.

Each of us set out on this entrepreneurial journey dreaming of creating world-leading companies from India. There is no reason why an Indian company cannot be the next Google, Facebook or Amazon. We know that you share our dream; you put it into words: Make in India. The Internet gives us all the potential to do that.

We share another dream with you, the dream of a Digital India. We dream of this as Indians, and also as businesses that wish to serve a fast-growing Indian market.

But for these dreams to come true, we need an open Internet.

Preserving the Start-up Ecosystem

The Internet is a single, global market where anyone can offer a product and be reachable by every user. This results in global competition and exchange of ideas, and drives innovation and progress.

If websites and internet applications had to first obtain a government license, or pay each Internet Service Provider (ISP) in the world—there are tens of thousands of them—this global market and competition, and the innovation and progress, would all disappear.

This is what we stand to lose if ISPs—which includes, now, telecom operators—are allowed to strike deals that favour some online services over their competitors. That would result in ISPs accepting payment from companies to make their competitors' websites inaccessible, slower or more expensive to access than their own.

These practices, if allowed, will prevent promising start-ups from using the Internet and end our dream of seeing them flourish. The western companies that dominate the Indian internet ecosystem today will use their deep pockets to perpetuate their position. The few start-ups that can afford it will be forced to find growth in foreign markets before they can return to India with the funds to pay ISPs. The rest will have to shut shop.

This would be catastrophic for our thriving start-up ecosystem.

Building a Digital India

India has the fastest growing internet user base in the world, but over 100 crore Indians still don't use the Internet.

Bringing them online is not merely a question of infrastructure or affordability; there should first be need and demand for Internet access. No poor person will begin to use the Internet just because access is cheap or even free. She would find no use for content that is not relevant to her needs; even less so when that content is in foreign languages.

The content and applications that will bring her online will not be created by the large western companies that dominate the Internet today, but by Indian start-ups like us. We can only do this if there is a level playing field, freedom to innovate, and yes, competition to drive us. Which of our products best fill her needs is a decision for each user to make, in the spirit of the free market. There should not be a corporate gatekeeper deciding this.

The key to attaining a Digital India is to let Indian start-ups experiment and build the must-have services for the next 100 crore Internet users.

Investment in Infrastructure

Cellular operators claim that providing internet access is not profitable enough to expand infrastructure. This claim contradicts their own annual reports which show increasing revenues and profits due to increased use of data. If that is not enough evidence, the fact that they continue to advertise their internet plans heavily and haven't increased prices demonstrates that this claim is untrue.

As consumer demand for internet access rises, the profitable market for providing Internet access will drive private investment into telecom infrastructure.

Zero Rating is Harmful Discrimination

Some telecom operators and large foreign companies try to falsely pit the idea of a Digital India against the principle of an open Internet.

They attempt to justify a form of discrimination called zero-rating by saying it allows them to offer "free internet to the poor".

We must point out that these offerings are neither "free", "the internet" nor "to the poor". They are not free but bundled with a paid mobile connection. Just as when a toothbrush is given "free" with toothpaste, it is really priced together as a bundle. The handful of sites that they offer in these packages —a few dozen at most—is a mere sliver of the 100 crore websites on the Internet. It must be noted that websites of government departments, educational institutions, health-care providers and others are not accessible through these offers. As to including the poor, the sites allowed in these "free" offerings and their advertising campaigns are aimed at luring away the middle-class customers of competing operators rather than reaching the poor or those who currently lack access.

Some argue that even with these flaws a few bundled websites are better than none. Quite the contrary: permitting these plans will cause serious economic harm. These are proprietary services that aim to lure users away from the real Internet, and will slow down or even reverse Internet adoption and delay Digital India. In addition, these offers will also cause a collapse of competition as crores of Indians will be locked into a few services—those that the ISPs have relationships with—resulting in a decline in quality of online content and applications.

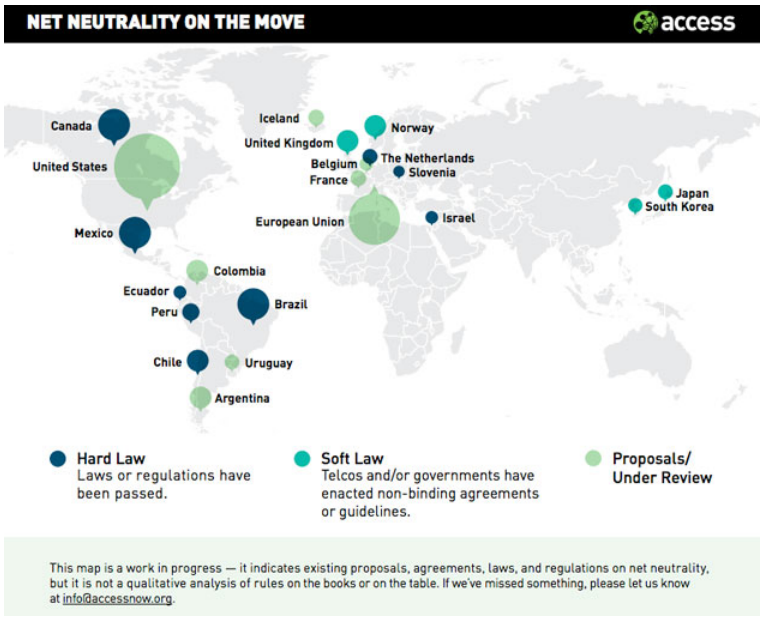
There are other ways to provide affordable Internet access to new users economically. For example, telcos may bundle internet access with voice by restricting it to a few hundred megabytes rather than to a few websites. Such plans leave it to the user to decide how his Internet plan is used, which is a powerful incentive to start-ups to provide services that benefit Internet novices and the disadvantaged.

Other Voices for Net Neutrality

Our desire for a level playing field on the Internet is shared overwhelmingly by consumers. Over the last two weeks over 10 lakh of India's best-informed citizens have written to TRAI to ask it to uphold "network neutrality" or non-discrimination by ISPs.

Many foreign nations share these views as well. Several, most recently Brazil, have passed laws to ensure net neutrality; many more countries like the US and European Union are in the process of doing so.

Here is the status of such laws in other countries as of December 2014:



Neutrality Violations have Started Already

Some telecom companies have shown scant respect for the issues presently under consideration by TRAI. In legally questionable moves, they have rolled out various services which violate network neutrality, apparently confident that they can do so without repercussions.

This is not only an affront to the Internet users in India but also to the regulatory powers of the Government of India. Forming regulations will take time. In the meanwhile, the Indian Internet user and Start-up Ecosystem must be protected.

In the absence of formal regulations on net neutrality, TRAI should issue an interim order or regulation preventing ongoing network neutrality violations by telecom service providers.

The Way Forward

We urge our government to protect the open, competitive Internet in India. We request that network neutrality is enforced and all discriminatory practices by ISPs are forbidden, including zero-rating, throttling, blocking, paid prioritization, toll-gating and others. We also hope that the regressive proposal to license online services, a throwback to the license-permit raj, will be dropped.

We, the start-ups that are at the forefront of creating Digital India, request you to take action now. We need you to protect our nation's innovation ecosystem.

Best regards,

The founders of the following 457 start-up companies.

1 34 Cross
2 48 Arts and Crafts
3 7Halo
4 7Prosper
5 Accrete Globus Technology
6 AcFire Computing
7 Acrodelon Technologies
8 ActiveSphere
9 Adapt Ready
10 AddoDoc
11 Adroitech
12 AdTriangle
13 Agentdesks
14 Aindra Systems
15 All Events in City
16 Amazatic Solutions
17 Another Brick In The Road
18 Aplopio
19 Appacitive
20 Appknox
21 Approwess Technologies
22 Armoks Interactive
23 Around.io
24 Askabt Tech. (Scrollback)
25 Athlos Sports
26 Atriium
27 Aurus NEtwork
28 AutoRaja
29 Azoi
30 BA Training School
31 Backpack
32 Backspace Consulting
33 BananaBandy
34 BankBazaar
35 Beard Design
36 Bestgift.in
37 Bidstalk
38 Bidsvilla
39 BigBinary
40 Bigminds Digital Systems
41 Binjj
42 BluBot Technologies
43 Bluerace Technologies
44 Boku
45 Bold Kiln
46 bonzai
47 bookticketnow.com
48 Bordoisila Media House
49 Bowstring Studio
50 BrainGain
51 Brainmedia.co.in
52 Branddify
53 Brandniti
54 Broadamp technologies
55 BuyHatke
56 Byte matrix
57 Byteridge
58 C42 Engineering
59 Cabbageheads
60 Campus Diaries
61 Capillary Technologies
62 Cardback
63 CarIQ
64 Cashkumar
65 Cavintek
66 Chauka Sports Solutions
67 Cheapest Online India
68 cheragh
69 CimplyFive Corporate Secretarial Services
70 Circus Tree
71 Citrusly Media Technology
72 Civil Maps
73 ClassMatrix
74 Clay Labs
75 ClearTax
76 Cleartrip
77 Clevershell Software Solutions
78 ClinchPad
79 CloudCover
80 CLOZERR
81 Codebrahma Technology
82 CodeIgnition
83 CodeMyMobile
84 Codians
85 Codlash Technologies
86 Coherendz
87 Contactz
88 coupik
89 Creative Capsule Infotech
90 Creativizt Communications
91 Crisp Clothing
92 CRISP Social Ventures
93 CrispyVeg
94 Crumbs & Unicorns
95 Crystal Power
96 Cumulations
97 Cupcakes and Closet
98 Cupick
99 CyberSetu India
100 Cybrilla
101 DataCulture
102 Dataphi Labs
103 Datoin
104 DCCPER
105 Demach
106 Design2Occupancy Services
107 Diet Code
108 dineout
109 DIY Motrpart
110 Dreamz unwired
111 DribbleLogics Systems
112 Dzire 2 Dzine
113 E2E Networks
114 Edgetech Media
115 Edufyme
116 Eko India Financial Services
117 Elitelogics
118 EnCloudEn
119 enParadigm
120 Enroot AR Network
121 Enterprise Nube Services
122 Epictions Transmedia
123 ErosLabs
124 Espress
125 Eventzinga
126 Eventizy
127 Evibe.in
128 EximBook
129 Eyepoppers Creative Solutions
130 Ezzoft
131 F-Grape
132 Fab Bag
133 fexfree tech
134 Fill in the Potholes Project
135 Findulum Techlabs
136 Finologic Technologies
137 Finstop
138 Firmloop
139 Flatchat
140 flatpebble.com
141 Fliqvine Media
142 Flixtub
143 Fluous Solutions
144 Flying Stars Informatics
145 foOfys Solutions
146 Foresight
147 Fossix.org
148 FourthLion Technologies
149 Freestone Infotech
150 Fromahome
151 fullhyd.com
152 Fungru
153 Fuzion Productions
154 Gaboli Online Services
155 Gamiana
156 GazeMetrix
157 GeekTrust
158 Genii
159 Gestell Technologies
160 Ghost Tech
161 GlamShutter Studio
162 GoGetGuru
163 Goibibo
164 Gozoomo.com
165 GradeStack Learning
166 Gramener
167 grannyads
168 Great place IT Services
169 Greenopia.in
170 GrexIt
171 Greytip Software.
172 Gyrix TechnoLabs
173 Han Digital Solution
174 HandyHome
175 Happy Horizons Consulting
176 happydevils.co
177 HasGeek Media
178 Hashcube
179 Hashtag Loyalty
180 Healthgraph India
181 HealthTokri.com
182 Helpshift
183 HelpSlip
184 Hercules Sports Nutrition
185 Hifx
186 Hipcask
187 Hitwicket
188 HLC International
189 Housing.com
190 Houzify
191 HtmlExperts
192 HyperVerge Technologies
193 I Love Diamonds
194 ibbani
195 IdeaBullet
196 Ideaflask
197 IdeaNanny Technologies
198 IDfy
199 IMomentous
200 Implementhit

201 iNetFrame Solutions
202 Infinite Loop
203 informant networks
204 Infruid Labs
205 Inkmonk
206 Inspiration Edge
207 Instamojo Technologies
208 Instant Hotels Around You
209 INTEC
210 Intellista Software Studios
211 Interactive Media
212 InterviewBay Ltd
213 InTouchApp
214 Inuxu Digital Media Technologies
215 Invicto Software Solutions
216 Ishto
217 iSource Online Services
218 Jana Care
219 Jaypore
220 Jinnie.co
221 Jnaapti
222 Junglee Games
223 JusPay Technologies
224 Just Play Sports Technologies
225 JustStickers
226 Karyaa
227 Katalyze Finesse
228 KaveriTech
229 Kayeura Technologies
230 Kaytek
231 Kincredible Tech
232 Knolskape
233 Koove
234 Kore
235 Kulture Shop
236 Landshark Labs
237 Liftoffllc
238 Livehealth
239 Logic Soft
240 LogicRoots
241 Lookup
242 Loonybin Technology
243 MakeMeOK.com
244 Mango Man Consumer Electronics
245 Market Simplified
246 Mathharbor
247 MavenHive Technologies
248 MayAxis Labs
249 medfinder
250 Medianama
251 Mediata
252 MercLain Technologies
253 metaHeat MediaTech
254 MetaRain Software Solutions
255 Metroplots
256 middlepath Technology Solutions
257 Miljul.in
258 MilkBasket.com
259 Mind Dots Software Systems
260 MindSparx
261 Mindstack Technologies
262 Miranj
263 Mobilitas Technologies
264 MobStac
265 Mondoboard
266 Multunus Software
267 Muto Technologies
268 Mutual Mobile
269 Mygram.me
270 Myjobnews.com
271 myNoticePeriod.com
272 Myrefers
273 Myriad Automation
274 MySmartPrice
275 Naina.co
276 nbus.in
277 Necto Technologies
278 nilenso
279 Novanet
280 Nusigma Creative Labs
281 octaware technologies
282 Openxcell
283 Optmyzr
284 Orobind
285 Osmnez
286 Owntastic
287 Ozonetel Systems
288 Paintcollar
289 Paravali IT Solutions
290 Peepalsys
291 Perdix Business Solutions
292 Prazas Learning
293 Preseed
294 Pronix Tech.
295 Protecta
296 Pyjama Party Studio
297 Pyoopel.com
298 Pyrodactyl Games
299 Qapfy IT Solutions
300 QED42 Engineering
301 Qlicket
302 Quantiguous Solutions
303 Quantumgraph
304 Quickly Solutions
305 Quikpills.com
306 Quinto
307 Quintype
308 Qulp
309 Qustn technologies
310 RailPass
311 Ralys consultants
312 Razorpay
313 Red Monster Game
314 Red Panthers Software Solutions
315 Reduce Data
316 Revealing Hour Creations
317 Revmakx Tehnologies
318 RippleHire
319 River Valley Technologies
320 RoadMojo
321 Rocket Science Innovations (BuyT.in)
322 Romin Interactive
323 RT&CO
324 Rtriangle
325 Saakshin Technologies
326 Sahu Soft India
327 savaari.com
328 SayOne
329 SchoolCom
330 Scimata Computing (Gazapp)
331 Scribie.com
332 SearchBox Technologies
333 SeekSherpa
334 Seven Hexagon Tech Labs
335 Shack Design
336 ShermansTravel Media
337 Shippr Technologies
338 ShopZOi
339 Silverlabs
340 Simplify360 India
341 SimplyPhi
342 smartbuildings
343 Smartlogix Technologies
344 SmartMumbaikar
345 SmartRx
346 SocialHelpouts
347 socit technologies
348 Sourceeasy
349 Spacenab
350 Spayee Labs
351 Spiceblue
352 Sportswizz Limited
353 Squadrun
354 StalkBuyLove.com
355 StartAP
356 Startify
357 Startup Goa
358 Startxlabs Technologies
359 Stellar Software Technologies
360 Stranger Arts
361 Stribr
362 Studeyo
363 Studio Fra
364 Studypad
365 Superlative Digital Solutions
366 Surgize
367 svigour
368 swapieze
369 Synup
370 Syosys
371 TableHero
372 talent anchor
373 TalentOne.in
374 Talentpad
375 Taritas Software Solutions
376 Teadude.com
377 Telesonic Networks Limited
378 Tenreads
379 TermSheet.io
380 Testbook.com
381 Texplore laboratories
382 The App Sec Lab
383 The Indicyb
384 The Random Lines
385 the Scribbler
386 TheSecretKart.com
387 TheWasim
388 TIFIT
389 TinyOwl
390 Tookitaki
391 Tracknext.com
392 Train2Teach-Online
393 Trendy Souk Retail

394 Tricog Health Services
395 Tripnary
396 Trivium technologies
397 Truebil.com
398 Turtlemint
399 TuSPAR Fashion
400 Uncommon.is
401 Uniserved
402 Unwired Labs (India)
403 Upside9
404 Uptime technology
405 Urva Tech Labs
406 Value Research India
407 valyoued
408 Vavia Technologies
409 Velocita Brand Consultants
410 Vicky.in
411 vidency
412 Vidooly
413 Vintage Cart
414 vintagenation.in
415 VioletStreet.com
416 Virdhara International
417 Vistaar Digital Communications
418 Vitesla
419 Voxapp
420 Walkinto
421 Walnut Knowledge Solutions
422 Walnut School
423 Waverr
424 Webly
425 WebSide
426 WeddingPitara.com
427 Wedeterna
428 What's The Scene India
429 WhiteSign
430 Wiinnova Software Labs
431 Wingify
432 Winwind Power Energy
433 wirecamp
434 Wisely Online Services
435 Wolken Software
436 WonderPoint Software
437 wosoft
438 XamCheck
439 Xerces Blue Software Solutions
440 Xola Travels
441 YatraChef
442 Yellbow Fashions
443 yelo
444 YumWeb
445 Zamplee
446 ZANEC Technologies
447 Zapota Online Services
448 ZapStitch
449 zapyle
450 Zenify.in
451 Zerodha
452 Zomato
453 Zootr sports
454 Zorse Labs
455 Ztek Consulting India
456 Zydness
457 Zyxware Technologies

I attest that I have received written authorizations from each signatory.

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