

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 757  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2018**

**FREE DATA SERVICES TO RURAL MASSES**

757. SHRI GUTHA SUKENDER REDDY:  
SHRI Y.S. AVINASH REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has suggested the Government to consider providing free data services to the rural masses;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has taken any decision in this regard; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &  
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS  
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)**

(a) & (b) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had suo-moto initiated a Consultation Paper on Free Data on 19.05.2016. Subsequently, TRAI provided its recommendations to Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on "Encouraging Data Usage in Rural Area through provisioning of Free Data" dated 19.12.2016. The recommendations inter-alia state that:

(i) In order to bridge the affordability gap for the persons residing in rural areas and to support Government's efforts towards cashless economy by incentivising digital means, the Authority recommends that scheme under which a reasonable amount of data, say 100MB per month, may be made available to rural subscribers for free.

(ii) The cost of implementation of the scheme may be met from Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF).

(c) & (d) The recommendations were referred back to TRAI for clarifications by DoT vide letter dated 25-09-2017. The response from TRAI dated 29-11-2017 has been received and is being examined in DoT.

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