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EXTRAORDINARY, PART III, SECTION 4**

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, 16th June 2025

F. No. RG-(6)/2024-FEA-II ---- In exercise of the powers conferred upon it under sub-section (2) of section 11, read with sub-clause (i) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of the said section, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997), the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India hereby makes the following Order to further amend the Telecommunication Tariff Order, 1999, namely:


**THE TELECOMMUNICATION TARIFF (SEVENTY FIRST AMENDMENT) ORDER, 2025
(01 of 2025)**

1. Short title, extent and commencement:

- (1) This Order may be called the Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy First Amendment) Order, 2025.
- (2) It shall come into force from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

2. In Schedule VI to the Telecommunication Tariff Order, 1999, after item (3), the following item (3A) and entry thereto shall be inserted, namely: -

ITEM	TARIFF
(3A) Tariff for retail broadband connectivity for Public Data Offices (PDOs) under the PM-WANI Scheme	Every service provider providing retail Fiber to the Home (FTTH) broadband services shall offer all of its retail FTTH broadband plans upto 200 Mbps to the PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme, at tariff not exceeding twice the tariff applicable to the retail subscribers for the corresponding FTTH broadband plan of the bandwidth (capacity) offered.


(D. Manoj)
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Note 1 - The Telecommunication Tariff Order, 1999 was published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part III, Section 4 under notification No. 99/3 dated 9th March, 1999, and subsequently amended as given below: -

Amendment No.	Notification No. and Date
1 st	301-4/99-TRAI (Econ) dated 30.03.1999
2 nd	301-4/99-TRAI(Econ) dated 31.05.1999
3 rd	301-4/99-TRAI(Econ) dated 31.05.1999
4 th	301-4/99-TRAI(Econ) dated 28.07.1999
5 th	301-4/99-TRAI(Econ) dated 17.09.1999
6 th	301-4/99-TRAI(Econ) dated 30.09.1999
7 th	301-8/2000-TRAI(Econ) dated 30.03.2000
8 th	301-8/2000-TRAI(Econ) dated 31.07.2000
9 th	301-8/2000-TRAI(Econ) dated 28.08.2000
10 th	306-1/99-TRAI(Econ) dated 09.11.2000
11 th	310-1(5)/TRAI-2000 dated 25.01.2001
12 th	301-9/2000-TRAI(Econ) dated 25.01.2001
13 th	303-4/TRA-2001 dated 01.05.2001
14 th	306-2/TRA-2001 dated 24.05.2001
15 th	310-1(5)/TRAI-2000 dated 20.07.2001
16 th	310-5(17)/2001-TRAI(Econ) dated 14.08.2001
17 th	301/2/2002-TRAI(Econ) dated 22.01.2002
18 th	303/3/2002-TRAI(Econ) dated 30.01.2002
19 th	303/3/2002-TRAI(Econ) dated 28.02.2002
20 th	312-7/2001-TRAI(Econ) 14.03.2002
21 st	301-6/2002-TRAI(Econ) dated 13.06.2002
22 nd	312-5/2002-TRAI(Eco) dated 04.07.2002
23 rd	303/8/2002-TRAI(Econ) dated 06.09.2002
24 th	306-2/2003-Econ dated 24.01.2003
25 th	306-2/2003-Econ dated 12.03.2003
26 th	306-2/2003-Econ dated 27.03.2003
27 th	303/6/2003-TRAI(Econ) dated 25.04.2003
28 th	301-51/2003-Econ dated 05.11.2003
29 th	301-56/2003-Econ dated 03.12.2003
30 th	301-4/2004(Econ) dated 16.01.2004
31 st	301-2/2004-Eco dated 07.07.2004
32 nd	301-37/2004-Eco dated 07.10.2004
33 rd	301-31/2004-Eco dated 08.12.2004
34 th	310-3(1)/2003-Eco dated 11.03.2005
35 th	310-3(1)/2003-Eco dated 31.03.2005
36 th	312-7/2003-Eco dated 21.04.2005
37 th	312-7/2003-Eco dated 02.05.2005
38 th	312-7/2003-Eco dated 02.06.2005
39 th	310-3(1)/2003-Eco dated 08.09.2005
40 th	310-3(1)/2003-Eco dated 16.09.2005
41 st	310-3(1)/2003-Eco dated 29.11.2005
42 nd	301-34/2005-Eco dated 07.03.2006
43 rd	301-2/2006-Eco dated 21.03.2006
44 th	301-34/2006-Eco dated 24.01.2007
45 th	301-18/2007-Eco dated 05.06.2007
46 th	301-36/2007-Eco dated 24.01.2008
47 th	301-14/2008-Eco dated 17.03.2008
48 th	301-31/2007-Eco dated 01.09.2008
49 th	301-25/2009-ER dated 20.11.2009



50 th	301-24/2012-ER dated 19.04.2012
51 st	301-26/2011-ER dated 20.04.2012
52 nd	301-41/2012-F&EA dated 19.09.2012
53 rd	301-39/2012-F&EA dated 01.10.2012
54 th	301-59/2012-F&EA dated 05.11.2012
55 th	301-10/2012-F&EA dated 17.06.2013
56 th	301-26/2012-ER dated 26.11.2013
57 th	312-2/2013-F&EA dated 14.07.2014
58 th	312-2/2013-F&EA dated 01.08.2014
59 th	310-5 (2)/2013-F&EA dated 21.11.2014
60 th	301-16/2014-F&EA dated 09.04.2015
61 st	301-30/2016-F&EA dated 22.11.2016
62 nd	301-30/2016-F&EA dated 27.12.2016
63 rd	312-1/2017-F&EA dated 16.02.2018
64 th	301-20/2018-F&EA dated 24.09.2018
65 th	301-03/2020-F&EA dated 03.06.2020
66 th	C-3/7/(5)/2021-FEA-1 dated 27.01.2022
67 th	C-3/7/(5)/2021-FEA-1 dated 31.03.2022
68 th	C/(5)/2021-FEA-II dated 07.04.2022
69 th	C/(2)/2021-FEA-I dated 06.12.2022
70 th	RG-13/1/(1)/2023-ADV FEA-I dated 23.12.2024

Note 2 – The Explanatory Memorandum explains the objects and reasons for the Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy First Amendment) Order, 2025.



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EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (hereinafter referred to as “the Authority”) is established under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (TRAI Act). Section 11(2) of TRAI Act provides that: -

“Notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 (13 of 1885), the Authority may, from time to time, by order, notify in the Official Gazette the rates at which the telecommunication services within India and outside India shall be provided under this Act including the rates at which messages shall be transmitted to any country outside India.

Provided that the Authority may notify different rates for different persons or class of persons for similar telecommunication services and where different rates are fixed as aforesaid the Authority shall record the reason therefor.”

2. In exercise of the above powers, the Authority has been notifying tariffs for various telecommunication services.

Background:

3. In March 2017, TRAI through its Recommendations on "Proliferation of Broadband through Public Wi-Fi Networks"¹ addressed various issues pertaining to bandwidth availability, regulatory and commercial constraints, demand side issues, authentication, and payment processes that potentially impact the uptake of public Wi-Fi.

4. In December 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal of DoT to proliferate Broadband through Public Wi-Fi networks under the framework of Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI). This framework takes forward the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 (NDCP, 2018)'s mission of 'Connect India' for creating a robust digital communications infrastructure. The PM-WANI framework envisages the provision of Broadband through Public Wi-Fi Hotspot providers and consists of the following elements:

- (i) Public Data Office (PDO), which establishes, maintains, and operate PM-WANI compliant Wi-Fi Access Points and provide last-mile connectivity to deliver Broadband services to subscribers by procuring internet bandwidth from telecom service providers and/or internet service providers;
- (ii) Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA), which provide aggregation services, such as authorization and accounting to PDOs, thereby facilitating PDOs in providing services to the end consumer;
- (iii) App Provider, who develops an application to register users and discover and display PM-WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in proximity for accessing the internet service and also authenticate the potential Broadband users;
- (iv) A Central Registry, which maintains the details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. The Central Registry is

¹ https://traai.gov.in/sites/default/files/WiFi_Recommendation_09032017.pdf



maintained by the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT)²;

(v) Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (WANI) ensures the interworking among systems and software applications used by these distributed entities i.e. PDOA, PDO, App Provider, and Central Registry.

5. In November 2022, the DoT in its communication to TRAI, *inter alia*, stated that

“...the proliferation of PM-WANI Hotspots is quite limited and much below the targets.”

DoT added the following observations for low proliferation of PM WANI hotspots:

“Extremely high cost of backhaul internet connectivity being charged by TSPs / ISPs from PDOs.”

“....In the name of commercial agreement, many times TSPs/ ISPs insist on PDOs to connect the public Wi-Fi Access Points using expensive Internet Leased Line (ILL) instead of the regular FTTH Broadband connection....”

6. The NDCP, 2018 under the ‘Connect India’ mission had set the goal to enable deployment of 5 million public Wi-Fi hotspots by 2020 and 10 million by December 2022³ for creating a robust digital communication infrastructure.

7. Further, for Digital India 2030 mobile and broadband policy objectives, the Bharat 6G Vision⁴ sets the goal of 10 million public Wi-Fi hotspots by 2022 and 50 million by 2030.

8. The above were taken into consideration by the Authority, while framing the draft Telecommunication Tariff (Seventieth Amendment) Order. The following paras elaborate reasons for issuing the draft TTO (70th amendment).

Draft Telecommunication Tariff (Seventieth Amendment) Order, 2024

9. The Authority on 23rd August 2024 issued the draft Telecommunication Tariff (Seventieth Amendment) Order, 2024 proposing “*Tariff for Public Data Office under PM-WANI scheme shall be same as is applicable for retail broadband (FTTH) connection.*”

10. It was mentioned in the draft TTO (70th Amendment) that, as on 22nd July 2024, there were 2,07,642 deployed PM-WANI Wi-Fi hotspots in the country and 199 PDOAs and 111 app providers⁵. PM-WANI hotspot numbers are much below the targeted numbers, as envisaged in the NDCP, 2018 document and in the Bharat 6G vision document. Thus, effective proliferation of PM-WANI hotspots is essential to achieve the outlined targets.

11. A comparison of 100 Mbps of Internet Leased Line (ILL) tariff vis-à-vis 100 Mbps of FTTH broadband connection shows that the annual tariffs for Internet leased line are 40 to 80 times higher than a retail connection. PDOs, specifically the small scale PDOs viz. small establishment, local shops/ retailers, *chaiwalas*, *kiranawalas*, storekeepers etc.,

² https://dot.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-12/11%20Brief%20PM%20WANI_0_0.pdf?download=1

³ <https://dot.gov.in/sites/default/files/EnglishPolicy-NDCP.pdf>

⁴ https://bharat6galliance.com/bharat6G/public/assets/OurOfferings/Bharat-6G-Vision-Statement-copy%20_1.pdf

⁵ <https://pmWANI.gov.in/WANI>

generally having low revenue potential, neither need an ILL connection nor can they afford high backhaul rates which are applicable for large commercial entities. This elevated cost of broadband connectivity may act as an impediment for PDOs, consequently impacting the proliferation of PM-WANI.

12. Therefore, considering economy wide potential benefits of the PM-WANI scheme, the goals and objectives of the Government and the limited revenue potential of small scale PDOs, the Authority felt that it is necessary to rationalize the cost of broadband connectivity to PDOs to pace up the proliferation of PM-WANI scheme.

Comments and Counter Comments received on Draft TTO 70th Amendment

13. The comments and counter comments on the draft Telecommunication Tariff (Seventieth Amendment) Order, 2024 were invited from the stakeholders by 6th September, 2024 and 13th September, 2024 respectively. In response to the same, comments from 14 stakeholders and counter comments from 7 stakeholders were received.

- Many stakeholders favored this move of the Authority stating that this order would give a big boost to the PM-WANI Yojana both in terms of growth of number of PDOs and internet users. Further, they had stated that this would enhance consumer protection, help remove a major roadblock and enable PDOs & PDOAs to offer affordable internet services.
- While advocating for the proposal of the Authority, it had been stated by some stakeholders that the rationalisation of tariffs will directly benefit the public, especially in areas where access to quality fixed broadband is either limited or unavailable. They also mentioned that making public Wi-Fi more affordable, can significantly help expand internet access to the underserved communities, thereby bridging the digital divide.
- Some stakeholders had argued that consumer tariffs are different from B2B tariffs. They had also stated that the consumer tariffs are under forbearance and need to be reported to TRAI and published on the website whereas, B2B tariffs, which also include the tariffs for backhaul, are governed through contracts and are specific to the customers and are not the same for each customer, nor are they required to be reported or published on the website. These stakeholders had also stated that backhaul service is not sold to the consumers but rather to the telecom/internet service provider. They argued that PDOA-PDO individually and/or jointly fall in the category of service providers, who are allowed to provide such telecommunication services through special dispensation enabling them to carry out such activities without a licence under the registration.
- It was further stated by the stakeholders that any commercial customer/backhaul will have a completely different usage pattern in which the overall consumption will be much higher than that of the retail customers. They argued that the commercial tariffs are different from the retail tariffs across all sectors. The most prominent example of this is in the energy sector and day to day examples can be seen in electricity tariffs, cooking gas cylinder rates among others.

14. Here it is significant to note that, as mentioned at para 5 above, the DoT vide its letter has stated that many times, in the name of commercial agreement, Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)/ Internet service Providers (ISPs) insist on PDOs to connect public Wi-Fi Access Points using expensive ILL instead of regular FTTH Broadband connection.

Further developments

15. DoT, through its order dated 16th September, 2024 has amended the following clause of PM-WANI framework:

<i>Present Clause</i>	<i>Amendment/Addition</i>
<i>Annexure B: Clause (a) (4) (under functions of PDO):</i> <i>"As per the WANI framework, PDOs will have commercial agreement with licensed Telecom Service Providers (TSP) or Internet Service Providers (ISP) for internet connectivity and with PDOA for Aggregation, Authorization, Accounting, and other related functions."</i>	<i>Annexure B: Clause (a) (4) (under functions of PDO) of PM WANI Guidelines is modified as follows:</i> <i>"As per the WANI framework, PDOs will avail internet connectivity from licensed Telecom Service Providers (TSP) or Internet Service Providers (ISP) and will have an agreement with PDOA for Aggregation, Authorization, Accounting, and other related functions."</i>

16. Pursuant to DoT's order dated 16th September, 2024, the requirement for Public Data Offices (PDOs) to enter into a commercial agreement with licensed Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) has been removed.

17. In view of the above amendment by DoT and the comments/ counter comments received from stakeholders, the Authority recognized the need to review and further rationalize broadband tariffs proposed for the PM-WANI scheme in the draft TTO(70th Amendment). The Authority felt that the proposed tariff framework should be such that promotes the proliferation of PM-WANI by safeguarding the interests of Public Data Offices (PDOs), particularly smaller PDOs, ensuring their sustainability and viability within the ecosystem. It should also protect the legitimate interests of service providers so that they are fairly compensated for supplying bandwidth to PDOs. While it was felt that a limit on the tariff charged by service providers to the PDOs is necessary, the proposal to keep it at par with the retail FTTH connections needed a review. A limit of twice the tariff charged for retail FTTH broadband connections was considered more reasonable, taking into account various factors.

18. Accordingly, the Authority issued a revised draft TTO (71st Amendment) on 15th January, 2025 with a view to create a fair and balanced tariff structure that fosters the growth of the PM-WANI ecosystem.

19. In the meantime, the Authority had issued TTO (70th Amendment) on 23rd December 2024 to extend the validity cap for Special Tariff Vouchers and Combo Vouchers. Hence, the amended version of the draft TTO (70th amendment) under consultation for prescribing broadband tariff (FTTH) for PDOs under PM-WANI scheme was issued as Draft Telecommunication Tariff (71st Amendment) Order, 2025.

Draft Telecommunication Tariff (71st Amendment) Order, 2025

20. The Authority issued the draft Telecommunication Tariff (71st Amendment) Order, 2025 on 15th January 2025. This draft proposed the following provision of broadband tariff for PDOs under PM-WANI scheme:

"Broadband tariff (FTTH) for Public Data Office (PDO) under the PM-WANI scheme shall not exceed twice the tariff

applicable for retail broadband FTTH services for the corresponding capacity offered by the respective service provider.”

Comments and Counter Comments received on Draft TTO (71st Amendment)

21. Stakeholders were invited to submit their comments and counter-comments on the draft TTO (71st Amendment) by 31st January 2025 and 7th February 2025, respectively. In response, the Authority received comments from fourteen stakeholders and counter-comments from four stakeholders. As part of the consultative process, an Open House Discussion (OHD) was also held on the draft TTO (71st Amendment) on 8th April 2025 to seek the views of stakeholders.

22. The comments/ counter comments received from stakeholders during the entire consultation process can be categorized into three (i) In support of Draft TTO (71st Amendment) along with the proposed ceiling; (ii) In support of Draft TTO (71st Amendment) with modifications to the proposed ceiling; and (iii) Not in favour of draft TTO (71st Amendment). The views expressed by the stakeholders are examined in the subsequent paragraphs.

Stakeholders in favor of Draft TTO (71st Amendment)

23. Certain stakeholders have favored the Draft Tariff Order, stating that it would give a significant boost to the PM-WANI Yojana by increasing the number of Public Data Offices (PDOs) and enhancing internet usage. The stakeholders appreciate the move to regulate the price of broadband connections for PDOs, capping it at a maximum of twice the rate of retail broadband connections, and considered this an important step towards promoting the PM-WANI scheme at a mass level. The stakeholders also highlighted that the proposed amendments are a step in the right direction for enabling affordable broadband access through public Wi-Fi hotspots and reflect TRAI's commitment to addressing critical issues related to consumer protection, affordability, and equitable service delivery.

Stakeholders in favor of Draft TTO (71st Amendment) with modifications in the proposed ceilings

24. Some stakeholders supported the Draft Tariff Order but suggested modifications to the proposed price ceilings. They stated that considering the data usage patterns under PM-WANI and with the objective of attracting more internet users, the tariff under PM-WANI should not exceed 1.75 times the standard FTTH plan. In rural areas, the tariff should remain at par with the standard FTTH plan.

25. Others proposed a flexible and progressive pricing model in place of the proposed ceiling of twice the FTTH retail price, with the view that this model would include parity with retail FTTH pricing to ensure that PDOs receive bandwidth at rates similar to regular consumers. It would also offer volume-based incentives to encourage ISPs to provide bulk discounts as PDO operations scale, thereby ensuring that at every stage, the price remains the same as or lower than the prevailing retail price.

26. One stakeholder emphasized that PDO tariffs must align with retail FTTH rates, as proposed in the (Draft) 70th

Amendment, to ensure the effective proliferation of PM-WANI stating that since no additional costs are incurred in supplying bandwidth to PDOs, the proposal to double the FTTH retail rates was unjustified. This stakeholder further stated that the Fair Usage Policy (FUP) of 3.5 TB in retail tariffs served as an assurance of high data availability without imposing significant additional costs on service providers. It was also pointed out that the PDO Booklet issued by DoT cites a typical annual broadband cost for PDOs as ₹6000/-, which is in line with existing retail tariffs.

27. Additionally, another stakeholder emphasized that higher tariffs could deter small entrepreneurs from participating in the PM-WANI ecosystem, thereby undermining the very objective of expanding broadband penetration. The stakeholder also stated that the PM-WANI model would bring in more players and create new business opportunities, leading to an expansion of the overall market rather than diminishing it. The stakeholder further emphasized that the expansion of affordable public Wi-Fi would complement FTTH growth by creating demand in previously unconnected areas. PM-WANI is intended to coexist with FTTH and mobile broadband services, not to replace them.

Stakeholders not in favor of the Draft TTO (71st Amendment)

28. Some stakeholders opposed the Draft Tariff Order. They stated that PDOs, with the capacity to connect 100 access points, would significantly expand coverage in densely populated public areas such as malls. They argued that the proposed amendment could potentially disrupt the existing structure of retail tariffs by leading to the removal of unlimited data benefits, increasing monthly rental charges, and imposing usage restrictions—all of which would be anti-consumer in nature. Additionally, stakeholders expressed concerns that the amendment could result in revenue losses for Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and the government exchequer, especially since PDOs are not required to pay license fees.

29. Some stakeholders questioned the relevance of PM-WANI in the current scenario, given the widespread availability of 4G and 5G services and the global trend of low-cost mobile data. They further argued that the combination of affordable mobile data, persistent security concerns, and issues related to the quality of public Wi-Fi has diminished the need for PM-WANI. These stakeholders emphasized that regulatory intervention should not be used to favor one business model over another, particularly in light of the substantial investments made by TSPs in building telecom infrastructure.

30. A few stakeholders also highlighted that mobile handsets continue to be the primary means of broadband access in the country, thereby reducing the relevance of public Wi-Fi. They also noted that reselling internet services should be carried out through Internet Leased Lines (ILL) rather than via FTTH connections. In addition, they cautioned that imposing price caps would distort the natural market equilibrium. It was asserted that any imposition of a tariff cap would confer an undue advantage upon PDOs, ultimately disrupting the level playing field within the broadband ecosystem.

31. They argued that B2B tariffs should be kept flexible, allowing for pricing negotiations based on specific usage patterns and contractual agreement. The commercial contractual arrangements, including tariffs, between the PDOA/PDO and TSPs should be left to market forces.

Examination of Stakeholders Comments

32. The Authority has carefully examined the views expressed by all the stakeholders. It has taken note of the issues and concerns raised by the stakeholders and seeks to regulate the tariff for the PM-WANI ecosystem so that it addresses these concerns in a balanced manner, while ensuring the orderly growth of PM-WANI.

33. As brought out by DoT one of the key reasons for the low proliferation of PM-WANI is the extremely high cost of internet connectivity charged by Telecom Service Providers and Internet Service Providers from PDOs. While proliferation of public Wi-Fi is the main objective of the PM-WANI scheme, it also aims to generate employment opportunities for small and micro enterprises and to provide them with an additional source of income by engaging them in rolling out public Wi-Fi. Given the limited revenue potential of such small-scale entities, high connectivity costs may act as an entry barrier, thereby discouraging their participation and hindering the expansion of the scheme.

34. Further, the Authority also takes note of DoT's order dated 16th September 2024 vide which the clause "*PDOs will have commercial agreement with licensed TSP/ISP for internet connectivity*" has been replaced with "*PDOs will avail internet connectivity from licensed TSP or ISP*", thereby removing the explicit requirement of commercial agreement from the PM WANI framework.

35. The Authority notes that some stakeholders have stated that commercial contractual arrangements, including tariffs, between the PDO and TSPs/ISPs should be left to market forces. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the proliferation of PM-WANI hotspots is quite limited and much below the targets. The Authority is of the view that the existing arrangement of leaving the tariff to market forces could be one of the major reasons for market failure of PM-WANI scheme.

36. In light of the foregoing, the Authority is of the considered opinion that it is essential to establish a tariff framework under the PM-WANI scheme that safeguards the interests of small-scale PDOs—such as *pan shops, kirana stores, etc.*, and facilitates the broader proliferation of the PM WANI scheme. Accordingly, the Authority finds it necessary to introduce tariff regulation in the form of a Tariff Order for the PM-WANI framework.

37. It is also noted by the Authority that some stakeholders have raised concerns regarding potential distortions in competitive market equilibrium due to tariff intervention. However, in this regard it is pertinent to mention that, as per the PM-WANI Central Registry, there are approximately 3 lakh registered PDOs, which constitute only a minimal percentage (0.7%) of the total FTTH connections (4 crore approx.)⁶. Given this relatively low number, the impact of PDOs on overall broadband market appears insignificant.

38. Stakeholders have further stated that tariff intervention, by distorting retail tariffs, may have adverse implications

⁶ As per data reported by TSPs to TRAI

for consumers. In this regard, it is pertinent to emphasize that the Government and various studies have consistently highlighted the economic, financial, and social benefits of the PM-WANI scheme. These aspects are elaborated in the subsequent paragraphs.

39. In December 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal of DoT to proliferate Broadband through Public Wi-Fi networks under the framework of Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI), highlighting various economic, financial and other benefits of the PM-WANI scheme, such as:

- (i) It is expected that with Public Wi-Fi Broadband, the user experience and Quality of Service for Broadband will be improved significantly;
- (ii) This service will be especially useful in rural areas where Public Wi-Fi Hotspots are also being created under BharatNet;
- (iii) Proliferation of Public Wi-Fi Hotspots will lead to increased employment for small and micro entrepreneurs and provide them with an additional source of income;
- (iv) The telecom and internet service providers will also benefit due to the sale of bandwidth to Public Data Office (PDOs);
- (v) Made in India Wi-Fi access points are envisaged to be encouraged for use in PM-WANI.

40. Further, a research paper⁷ titled "PM-WANI (Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) – Technology and Business Case for VLE (Village Level Entrepreneur)" underscores PM-WANI's role as an economical and rapid means of providing connectivity to unconnected populations. It has been stated that:

"PM-WANI can provide significant boost to the government's digital ambition – ubiquitous connectivity, digital inclusion and enabling infrastructure. In addition, productivity improvements from Wi-Fi can translate into tangible benefits to economy.

The proliferation of public Wi-Fi hotspots under the PM-WANI scheme is particularly significant for rural areas, where it can create employment opportunities for small and micro-entrepreneurs by providing them with an additional revenue stream.

This, in turn, is expected to drive demand for data services. Telecom and internet service providers will also benefit through increased bandwidth sales to Public Data Offices (PDOs) and growing consumer demand.

Rather than acting as a substitute for data services offered by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs), the PM-WANI scheme is positioned to complement existing offerings, fostering an expanded digital ecosystem."

⁷ <https://www.akgec.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/3>

41. In view of the above, the Authority is of the opinion that the proliferation of Public Data Offices (PDOs) will enhance the options available to consumers for accessing data services, thereby potentially improving overall access to internet and hence consumer welfare. The Authority further believes that a tariff framework which balances the interests of both PDOs, particularly smaller entities and service providers will promote efficiency in the internet service market, rather than adversely affecting it.

Tariff Framework for PM-WANI

42. The Authority aims to develop a tariff framework that appropriately balances the interests of all stakeholders involved, by ensuring affordable broadband access for Public Data Offices (PDOs), especially the small PDOs while also safeguarding the reasonable commercial interests of service providers. In formulating the tariff framework for the PM-WANI ecosystem, the Authority has made effort to take into account prevailing market scenario, the current levels of adoption of PM-WANI services, as well as potential future growth. The tariff framework has been designed to facilitate the orderly and sustainable growth of the PM-WANI initiative and to foster better coordination between service providers and PDOs by creating reasonable incentives for service providers to supply bandwidth to PDOs. The considerations underpinning this approach are discussed in the subsequent paras.

43. In order to determine tariff framework for PM-WANI, the Authority analyzed the tariffs presently offered to PDOs, the capacities of these PM-WANI plans, and their comparison to retail broadband FTTH tariffs. The Authority notes that a service provider is already offering broadband plans specifically for PM-WANI. A comparison between their 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps retail FTTH plans and the corresponding PM-WANI plans reveals that the PM-WANI tariffs are approximately twice that of retail broadband FTTH tariffs. The details are given below: -

Plan details	Price (Rs.)	Ratio
100 Mbps plans		
PM-WANI Plan	1532.82	
Retail broadband FTTH plan	706.82	2.17
50 Mbps plans		
PM-WANI Plan	1178.82	
Retail broadband FTTH plan	588.82	2.00

44. Further, DOT's order no. DS-16/13/2017-DS-III(Vol-II) dated 16.09.2024, *inter alia* states that: -

“6. In an Access Point, it is possible to configure SSIDs, one for private use and another for public use. PDOs could use the existing Access Points working at homes or enterprises for establishing the public Wi-Fi hotspots by configuring 2nd SSID and integrating the same with the captive portal of registered PDOA, subject to prior intimation to ISP / TSP.”

45. In the above context, based on information gathered from one of the largest Public Data Office Aggregators

(PDOAs), it is observed that most of the PDOs aggregated by this PDOA have deployed a single broadband access point both for personal use and for external use under PM-WANI hotspot. Considering this dual usage, that is, for personal consumption as well as for the provision of PM-WANI services, it is considered reasonable that the tariff applicable to a broadband connection availed by a Public Data Office may be higher than that applicable to a standard retail broadband customer. This approach is also expected to safeguard the reasonable commercial interests of the service providers.

46. Furthermore, according to data provided by the same PDOA, a large number of its Public Data Offices onboarded by it are small, residential setups located in low income neighborhood providing affordable and accessible broadband internet to the masses, especially the subscribers at the bottom of the pyramid. These Public Data Offices generally have a limited data consumption under PM-WANI scheme as compared with regular retail connection, i.e. the data consumption under PM-WANI scheme is generally less than the data consumed for personal use out of this connection. The Authority in this regard recognizes the small-scale nature and limited revenue potential of small PDOs and considers that high broadband connectivity costs can act as a significant entry barrier for such small entities and may adversely impact the proliferation of the PM-WANI scheme. Therefore, the Authority is of the view that, for the present, the tariff for a retail broadband FTTH connection availed by a Public Data Office should not exceed twice the prevailing tariff for a regular retail broadband FTTH connection.

47. This approach is expected to ensure viable and affordable access to internet connectivity for small Public Data Offices such as *pan shops, kirana stores etc.*, while also protecting the legitimate commercial interests of the service providers.

48. It is important to note, while the Authority is prescribing a ceiling of twice the retail broadband FTTH tariff, service providers may offer FTTH broadband connections to PDOs at lower tariffs—such as at par with retail rates, or 1.5 times retail, or any level up to the maximum limit of twice the retail broadband FTTH tariff. Some stakeholders have stated that, since current data usage, subscriber base and revenue of PDOs through provision of PM-WANI service is limited, the ceiling should be set lower than the ceiling of twice the retail tariffs. The Authority in this regard is of the view that the ceiling of up to twice the retail price will account for potential future growth in data usage. This flexibility allows service providers to design their offerings while protecting their interests.

49. The Authority is also cognizant of the fact that increase in adoption of the PM-WANI services may lead to the data usage by Public Data Offices eventually surpassing twice that of regular retail FTTH broadband users. In such circumstances, it may be reasonable to re-examine the prescribed tariff ceiling, whether it needs a revision. To address this, the Authority will periodically review the number of active Public Data Offices and their corresponding data usage patterns.

50. One of the primary objectives of the tariff framework is to safeguard the interests of small Public Data Offices (PDOs) such as local shops, *panwala, kirana stores*, and other small establishments that typically operate with limited revenue potential. In order to ensure equitable access to retail broadband tariffs for all Public Data Offices (PDOs), it is essential that every Telecom Service Provider (TSP) and Internet Service Provider (ISP) be mandated to introduce FTTH broadband plans for the PM-WANI scheme. Such a requirement would promote affordability and accessibility for small-

scale PDOs, thereby facilitating the broader expansion of the PM-WANI ecosystem to the masses especially the underserved. Proliferation of public Wi-Fi hotspots can play a significant role in generating employment and offering additional income opportunities for small and micro-entrepreneurs.

51. Furthermore, each service provider shall be required to offer PM-WANI specific broadband FTTH plans with capacities adequate to ensure a minimum acceptable level of service quality, account for the anticipated future growth in demand under the PM-WANI scheme and enable the sustainable proliferation of the PM-WANI ecosystem. This is examined in the succeeding paragraphs.

52. Considering that small PDOs generally have limited revenue potential, it indicates that users at these locations primarily engage in basic digital activities such as education, entertainment and digital financial activities.

53. It is also pertinent to mention that one of the largest Public Data Office Aggregators in the country has reported that the majority of its associated Public Data Offices are small-scale entities that currently operate on broadband plans with bandwidth (capacity) of upto 100 Mbps. Furthermore, the service provider offering PM-WANI-specific broadband plans to these Public Data Offices presently are available for two bandwidths (capacity) i.e. 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps. While the current usage by most Public Data Offices remains within the 100 Mbps range, the Authority is of the view that, in order to support the growth of small-scale Public Data Offices and the overall expansion of the PM-WANI service, provisioning of broadband FTTH plans with bandwidths of up to 200 Mbps would offer sufficient flexibility to meet future demand.

54. In line with the above discussions, the Authority is of the view that at present a bandwidth (capacity) of 200Mbps may be adequate to meet the interest of the small scale PDOs and accordingly, the Authority has decided that every service provider shall offer FTTH Broadband tariffs plans for PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme for all the bandwidth (capacity), atleast upto 200 Mbps. The tariff for broadband connectivity to PDOs for bandwidth (capacity) exceeding 200 Mbps can be under forbearance, as at this stage tariff intervention beyond the bandwidth of 200Mbps is not considered necessary.

55. The Authority intends to establish a fair and balanced framework that supports the interests of both small PDOs as well as service providers, thereby promoting the sustainable growth of the PM-WANI ecosystem. Considering the above facts and discussions, the Authority is of the opinion that ceiling of two times the retail tariff may prove to be beneficial in achieving the said objectives. Accordingly, the Authority decides that broadband FTTH tariff (Retail) for PDO under the PM-WANI scheme shall, in no case, exceed two times the existing tariff applicable for regular retail FTTH Broadband connection.

56. It must be emphasized that the scope of this tariff order is specifically applicable to retail FTTH broadband tariffs offered to Public Data Offices under the PM-WANI scheme for bandwidths up to and including 200 Mbps. It does not extend to tariffs for any other type of internet connectivity sought by PDOs under PM-WANI scheme.

57. In summary, to ensure a balanced and inclusive approach, the Authority prescribes the following tariff framework for the PM-WANI scheme:

“Every service provider providing retail Fiber to the Home (FTTH) broadband services shall offer all of its retail FTTH broadband plans upto 200 Mbps to the PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme, at tariff not exceeding twice the tariff applicable to the retail subscribers for the corresponding FTTH broadband plan of the bandwidth (capacity) offered.”

58. This pricing framework has been designed to appropriately balance the interests of all stakeholders by ensuring affordability for small-scale Public Data Offices (PDOs) while also providing economic incentives to service providers. In line with the broader objectives of the PM-WANI scheme, the tariff framework takes into account prevailing market scenario, current levels of adoption of PM-WANI services, as well as potential future growth. By aligning with these considerations, the framework aims to facilitate the orderly, sustainable, and inclusive growth of the public Wi-Fi ecosystem under the PM-WANI initiative.

59. The Authority will review the proliferation and usage of the scheme and may review the tariff for PDOs under PM-WANI scheme, as and when deemed necessary.