

**Intervention Script of Mr. S.K. Gupta, Secretary, TRAI at the APT Web Dialogue**

**‘COVID-19 Responses from Asia-Pacific’ held on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2020.**

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At the outset I would like to thank APT for giving me the opportunity to address the gathering at this virtual meeting. I congratulate APT for taking this timely initiative to organize this web dialogue to discuss very relevant points related to our response to COVID-19 situation in our region. At the same time I would like to express my sincere sympathy for the people who are suffering due to this pandemic and wish them a speedy recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented and most challenging situation in the region. The governments, authorities and regulators in the Asia Pacific Region are taking all necessary steps to tackle the situation.

Social distancing and quarantine has become part of life. Due to nationwide lock down, people are working from home, schools have turned to online teaching and people are accessing more online entertainments, which has resulted in stress on available bandwidth and network. Therefore, we must ensure high speed, reliable broadband connectivity with good quality of service.

Government of India has taken many technology based solutions to tackle the situation. There are number of Mobile Applications (Apps) which are proved very useful during this time. The ‘Aarogya Setu’ APP enable people to assess themselves the risk of catching the Corona Virus infection. This will alert people when they come across any infected persons. This App also facilitate issuing of E-passes which are permits required for moving around to carry out essential services during the lock down period. Also this App helps in reporting of infected people and monitors them during the quarantine period.

Also we have developed a GIS based portal for mapping the locations of the COVID-19 infected persons for the preceding 15 days from the date of confirmation of disease to help the authorities. The portal is designed in such a way that locations, so plotted will be restricted to places where the affected person has spent more than 15 minutes and with color-code indicating the alert zones.

Another system has been developed which is called 'COVID-19 Quarantine Alert System'(CAQS) which can be used to locate the quarantined persons, track and alert the respective State Government authorities if they cross the geo-fence (around 300 mtrs).

Some of the measures to be taken :

Due to sudden increase in the online traffic, the band-width needs to be optimized to meet the demand. The wired broadband penetration is very low in our country, and most of the people are depending on the mobile networks for data connectivity. In order to meet this, the Network needs to be upgraded. As installing excess capacity could be difficult and time consuming, we need to explore other ways to solve this problem.

The Fiberisation in the country should be enhanced which is an essential backhaul requirement for high speed data network deployments. In the meantime, available spectrum to enhance backhaul connectivity has to be allocated.

The quality of service in Broadband services should be ensured. The penetration of Wireline Broadband should be increased as presently the wireless internet/broadband penetration is higher.

Infrastructure sharing should be encouraged among the TSPs. The un-utilized spectrum should be shared among the service providers.

The proliferation of broadband through public Wi-fi networks should be given priority. We are also encouraging provision of broadband in household through available cable TV network.

In closing, I once again thank APT for organizing this Web-dialogue.

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