

Request Cooperation for Joint Action to Ensure Facilitate Smooth Functioning of Data Communications Services in this Critical Period

Dear Industry Colleagues,

1. We take this opportunity to reach out to you for your support. As you are aware, the whole world is facing an unprecedented situation due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Governments are taking various measures to reduce social interactions to contain the spread of Covid-19.

2. In the past few days, in India too, advisories have been issued by various Government agencies including social distancing, restrictions in terms of workplace, also encouraging Work From Home (WFH), online/ digital education, digital payments/ transactions, online healthcare, wherever possible and other critical requirements to be met through digital means.

3. This sudden surge in digital use is already putting pressure on the network infrastructure of the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs). The TSPs are taking requisite steps to manage this load and facilitate the smooth functioning of the networks during this critical time.

4. However, due to lockdown/ quarantine measures in various parts of the country, a sudden surge in demand for online video streaming is also expected to rise substantially. We believe that during this critical time, it is absolutely essential for the streaming platforms to cooperate with TSPs so as to manage the traffic distribution patterns which are likely to strain the network infrastructure at a time when it is needed for various critical requirements.

5. We understand that there are various measures that the streaming platform companies can undertake in this present situation to continue to provide a suitable level of service to their customers at the most appropriate bitrate required, one such measure being temporarily moving to SD (Standard Definition) rather than HD (Hi Definition) streaming. We understand that there may be other such technical measures that may be taken to ease the pressure on infrastructure. Also, during this period, advertisements and pop ups, which usually consume high bandwidth should be removed and if required, may be replaced with public announcements on awareness regarding the virus.

6. We understand that similar measures are being taken by various streaming platforms internationally like in the US and Europe as more and more countries enter lockdown to combat the spread of the virus. Links to some of the media reports highlighting this are given below:

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/youtube-netflix-cut-streaming-quality-in-europe-amid-coronavirus-lockdowns.html>

<https://www.indiatoday.in/technology/news/story/coronavirus-pandemic-netflix-to-reduce-video-quality-to-save-internet-1657803-2020-03-20>

7. It is pertinent to note that the need of the hour is that companies offering streaming platform service and TSPs take joint responsibility to take steps to ensure smooth functioning of the data communication networks to align with other measures being taken in this battle to curb the propagation of the virus.

8. This joint action from all of us to suitably the pressure on infrastructure and to facilitate remote working, online education, digital healthcare, payments and other critical services at a time of region-wide public health crisis would go a long way in helping the citizens and country at large.

We look forward working together and seek your cooperation and revert on steps taken in this important matter on priority please.
