

'Net neutrality violation takes away right to free speech'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

THE National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) called for regulators to maintain net neutrality, saying that any discrimination in the treatment of data online amounted to violation of the fundamental right of free speech.

Summarising its response to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (Trai) consultation paper on net neutrality and the regulation of online content providers, president of Nasscom R Chandrashekhar said: "the user's right to choose is inviolable and akin to freedom of speech. It would be seriously compromised when regula-

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When some websites and applications come free of usage costs, it would influence user away from content that has to be paid for, establishing discrimination based on price, he said. Similarly, regulators should ensure that telecom service providers do not practice non-price discrimination

whereby they can throttle the speed of access to certain websites while allowing faster access to preferred sites, he said.

"Freedom of speech also means the freedom to listen. When several people speak (in the sense that there are several apps and websites available) but I can listen to only a few (as in, some apps and websites may be slower or could cost more), it violates the freedom of expression," he said.