GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3372
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25TH MARCH, 2021

SECURITY OF FREE AND PUBLIC WI-FI CONNECTIONS

3372 #   DR. KIRODI LAL MEENA:

Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a)   whether adequate measures have been taken/proposed to be taken by Government to ensure the security of free and public Wi-Fi connections and privacy of users data, being provided at many places like railway stations, airports and other public places of the country, if so, the details thereof;

(b)   whether Government intends to mandatorily display the information regarding the methods of its use and safe internet browsing at the said places; and

(c)   if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION AND ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI SANJAY DHOTRE)

(a)   Sir, the Government has taken adequate steps to ensure privacy of user data and security of free and public Wi-Fi connections being provided at many places in the country such as railway stations, airports and other public places. Intentionally damaging or tampering with telegraphs or unlawfully attempting to learn the contents of messages is a punishable offence as per the Section 24, 25 & 26 of the Indian Telegraph Act. Moreover, DoT has issued instructions in February 2009 to Telecom Service Providers who have been granted Licenses for provision of Telecom services regarding safeguards in provision of Wi-Fi Internet services in the delicensed frequency band for secure use of Wi-Fi services including those provided at public places i.e. Hotel, Restaurants, Airports, Malls, Shops, Railway Stations through Hotspot etc.

Further, a document on Security in Public Wi-Fi Implementations-Best Practices was circulated to Internet service Providers (ISPs) for implementation.

Recently, the proposal for Proliferation of Broadband through Public Wi-Fi Networks named as Prime Minister Wireless Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) framework has been approved by the Cabinet. The distributed model allows smaller players to provide Wi-Fi services without having to incur heavy costs. The Security Guidelines for PM-WANI provides for following:

i) Provisions by Public data Office Aggregator (PDOA) for storage of user data for one year to ensure compliance with legal provisions, as required.

ii) User data privacy is to be ensured by App Providers and PDOAs. Complete user data and usage logs is to be stored within India.

iii) Provisions by the App Provider, PDOA and Central Registry Provider to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of any information about a third party to whom it provides the service.

(b)   The implementation of License clauses related with the Security, Privacy and Data confidentiality, the instructions issued in 2009 regarding safeguards in provisioning of Wi-Fi Internet services and the document containing the Best Practices on Security in Public Wi-Fi enables the display of information regarding a Secure Wi-Fi on the user terminal/Mobile phone being used. This also enables a simple, secure and safe internet access by the users through the Wi-Fi obviating the need for display of information regarding safe internet browsing and modalities of its use at these places.

(c)   The program of MeitY titled "Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA)" has an objective of Creation of Mass Information Security Awareness towards academic, general and Government users. Further, Government has instructed Telecom Service Providers/Internet Service Providers under Unified License (Similar provisions in other Licences also) to protect the interest of the stakeholders/customers and privacy of the individual through License conditions.

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