

50 IIT, IISc faculty urge Trai to junk FB Free Basics

Nearly 50 academicians working in elite educational institutions such as five IITs and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore have denounced Facebook's Free Basics initiative, terming it "flawed" and "misleading".

In a joint statement, they said the proposal was a "lethal combination that will lead to total lack of freedom on how Indians can use the internet". It violates one of the core architectural principles of internet design: net neutrality, they added.

Urging Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) to "thoroughly reject" the proposal as it is a "marketing gimmick", they feared that Facebook was trying to redefine a 'basic service' and would end up with access to all apps' contents of the users. **P 6**

IITs, IISc ask Trai to junk Free Basics

Say 'Lethal' FB Plan Violates Net Neutrality

LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU

Kolkata: Academicians from IITs and IISc have slammed Facebook's Free Basics initiative, terming it "flawed" and "misleading".

In a joint statement issued on Tuesday, around 50 faculty members from IITs (Bombay, Delhi, Kharagpur, Madras, Patna) and IISc Bengaluru have denounced the proposal dubbing it a "lethal combination that will lead to total lack of freedom on how Indians can use the internet".

Listing three major flaws in the programme, the scientists urged the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) to "thoroughly reject" Facebook's proposal.

Among the "flaws" flagged by the scientists, the first is that "Facebook will have access to all your apps' contents" which has "deep and disturbing impli-

cations".

Secondly, "since Facebook can access unencrypted contents of users' 'basic' services, either we get to consider health

apps to be not basic, or risk revealing health records of all Indians to Facebook".

Finally, the scientists contend, "the term 'free' in 'free ba-

sics' is a marketing gimmick".

They called the proposal "unsurprising", but said that it "violates the core principles of net neutrality". **IANs**



Trai extends final date for comments till January 11

Telecom regulator Trai on Wednesday extended the last date for receiving comments on its paper on differential data pricing — a key aspect of the raging debate on net neutrality — by about a week to January 7. The date has been extended at a time when social network Facebook has launched a massive campaign in support of its Free Basics service, which has been dubbed in various quarters as violative of net neutrality. "We have extended it to January 7 mainly due to request from telecom industry bodies," Trai chairman R S Sharma said. The deadline for comments on the paper was earlier scheduled to end on Tuesday.

Although the paper by Trai does not mention or use the term net neutrality, it details the idea of zero-rating platforms that have stirred up a big debate on the issue across the country. **PTI**