

HRD ministry writes to colleges for providing free WiFi to students

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NEW DELHI: Colleges and technical institutes across the country may soon offer free Wi-Fi to students and staff.

The Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry has written to vice-chancellors and heads of all higher educational institutions asking them to contact telecom service providers who are willing to provide internet services for free.

According to the letter, each user would have a quota of data they can use for free after which, they will have to pay the telecom service provider. Ministry officials said they plan on targeting 50,000 campuses in the country.

"The creation of digital campus would require a large national effort involving both private and public players. Some telecom service providers have already evinced interest in participating in this effort," reads the letter sent on January 15.

"It is expected that the facility is to be provided by telecom service and internet service providers at their own cost. There shall be no financial implications to the institution ..." the letter further said.

Last year, Mukesh Ambani-owned Reliance Jio had expressed a desire to connect close to 38,000 colleges (technical and non-technical) under the HRD ministry by deploying free Wi-Fi connectivity.

The issue was examined and it was decided that the ministry would seek advice from Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). Both agencies have either supported the proposal or had no objection