

Govt mulling interoperability for public Wi-Fi network

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, February 15

THE GOVERNMENT IS considering a proposal to enable interoperability for public Wi-Fi network, which will translate into a seamless connectivity experience for users, a top Department of Telecom official said on Friday.

Telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan said 3.7 lakh Wi-Fi hotspots have been deployed by the industry – against the stated commitment of rolling out one million Wi-Fi hotspots by December 2019 – and added that once the security nod is obtained on interoperability, it would lead to seamless experience for users and generate new revenue sources for small entrepreneurs.

“Working in tandem with

Trai (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) and with service providers, we are hoping to deploy an interoperable public Wi-Fi network,” Sundararajan said at an event organised by the Broadband India Forum.

“Telecom service providers have committed to a target of rolling out one million Wi-Fi hotspots by end of 2019, and so far we are at about 3.7 lakh Wi-Fi hotspots which have been deployed, but they have not yet become interoperable. Once we get the security clearance for this, we expect to have a full interoperable Wi-Fi ecosystem, which will be pioneering,” she said, adding that the proposed model of interoperability will be a “game changer”.

“The MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) has to give the final security clearance, they

are looking at it. We expect it to be given shortly,” Sundararajan told reporters.

She said interoperability will make the customer experience seamless, ensuring single log in and one-time payment for users. “Today if you go to an airport, you have to log in each time and in some cases you have to pay... unless it is bundled with your service provider... This (interoperability) will mean that you can access it anywhere, any Wi-Fi provided by any service provider and you need to pay once, log in once and use anywhere... That will be something completely new,” she said.

Public Wi-Fi is vital for India, given the surge in data consumption and the fact that broadband connectivity needs to reach one billion Indians.