

Info Capsule

AFFORDABLE TARIFF STRUCTURE FOR RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS TO PROMOTE DIGITAL INDIA¹

BharatNet, a flagship project of the Government of India to provide Broadband services in rural and remote areas has entered in service provisioning phase. As on November 5, 2017, Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) connectivity has been achieved in 1,03,275 GPs by laying fibre for 2,38,677 km. Due to several measures initiated to accelerate the end-to-end connectivity, GPON equipment has been installed in 85,506 GPs and 75,082 GPs are Services Ready.

Digital India, to provide Digital Services in rural and remote areas, is one of the priority areas of the Government. In order to provide affordable broadband services in rural India under the dynamic leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, a new attractive and affordable tariff structure has been decided with the principle of more you use, less you pay. This tariff structure is expected to be reflected in the tariffs to be charged from the consumers by the service providers.

For asymmetrical bandwidth between block to GPs the charges per annum varies from Rs.700/- per Mbps for up to 10Mbps and Rs. 200/- per Mbps for 1 Gbps. However, for symmetrical bandwidth between block to GP, charges have been prescribed as Rs.1000/- per Mbps up to 10Mbps, and Rs.500/- per Mbps for 100 Mbps per annum. Tariff for any intermediate Bandwidth shall be calculated on pro-rata basis.

Further, discount of 5% to 25% have been offered for taking bandwidth in more than 1000 GPs to more than 25,000 GPs in a single application. Further, to lower the entry barriers, port charges at block and GP have been waived off. Tariffs for dark fibre are prescribed as Rs.2250/- per fibre per km per annum for service providers and Government agencies.

After such initiatives have been taken by the government, Telecom Service Providers have come forward for utilizing the BharatNet connectivity. Airtel has shown interest in 10000 GPs for taking 1 Gbps connectivity on lease while Reliance Jio, Vodafone and Idea are interested in taking 100 Mbps connectivity on lease in about 30000, 2000 and 1000 GPs respectively. The rolling out of services by TSPs in these GPs is expected to trigger the village level eco-system thereby widening the extent to cover more and more number of GPs in near future. This will give an impetus to broadband facilities in rural India.

4th INDIA-CANADA ANNUAL MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE IN NEW DELHI²

A high level delegation led by the Canadian International Trade Minister, Mr. François-Philippe Champagne is visiting India to attend the 4th Annual Ministerial Dialogue (AMD) scheduled to begin on November 13, 2017 in New Delhi. The Indian delegation will be led by the Commerce and Industry Minister, Shri Suresh Prabhu.

¹ Available at: <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

² Available at: <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

In the current round of the Ministerial Dialogue, India and Canada would be focusing on some of the key commercial drivers to enhance the India-Canada partnership. Efforts would be made to work towards the expeditious conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) for a progressive, balanced, and mutually beneficial agreement covering both goods and services. Considering the high potential for bilateral trade, the trade ministers of both countries are likely to discuss issues to explore ways of expediting the early conclusion of the CEPA and the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA). They would also explore options for Indian interests in addressing the Temporary Foreign Workers Programme (TWFP) of Canada, which is affecting the movement of Indian professionals seeking short term visas, address equivalence by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for Indian organic product exports and exploring two way investment opportunities.

India has long standing friendly bilateral relations with Canada. Though geographically separated by a large distance, the historical ties between the two countries date back to the late 19th Century, when Indians began migrating in small numbers to British Columbia in Canada. Canada now has over 1.2 million Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), comprising more than 3 percent of its population. Though India's commercial ties with US have seen an upswing in the last few years, trade and investment relations between India and Canada are yet to realise their full potential. Given enormous complementarities, a concerted effort to boost bilateral trade and investment from both sides would provide a fruitful outcome.

EXEMPTION FROM IGST ON IMPORT OF SPECIFIC SPORTS GOODS BY SPORTS PERSONS OF OUTSTANDING EMINENCE

In a major impetus to promoting sports in the country, the GST Council in its 23rd meeting held at Guwahati on 10th November, 2017, has exempted the import of specific sports goods by sports persons of outstanding eminence from the ambit of Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST).

Expressing his gratitude, Minister of State (I/C) Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore thanked Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley and the GST Council for the decision. He added that the move is a major institutional support for sports and will be a big boost to promoting sports in the country. The change in IGST exemption will come into effect from November 15, 2017.

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