

# Experts caution against perils of online platform Free Basics

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**MYSURU:** Experts during a panel discussion on Internet neutrality in Mysuru cautioned against the perils of Free Basics, an online platform proposed by Facebook to provide certain websites and Internet services for free, and hoped that the government takes steps to provide free Internet.

The discussion titled 'Net Neutrality vs. Free Basics' was organised jointly by the Mysore University Information and the Library Science Alumni Network (MILAN) and the SDM Institute of Management Development here on Monday.

Speakers, while justifying the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI's) decision to reject Free Basics, pointed out that the initiative would give undue advantage to certain companies and entities at the cost of others. However, the panellists also rued that the government did not have a policy on net neutrality.

N.V. Sathyanarayana, chairman and managing director of Informatics India Ltd., pointed out that there was a huge demand for free Internet in the country and hoped that the government would come



Kalpesh Mehta, Shalini R. Urs, N.V. Satyanarayana and Sudhir Sosale during a discussion on Net neutrality in Mysuru on Monday. — PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

up with strategies to counter Free Basics.

Shalini R. Urs, executive director, International School of Information Management (ISiM), University of Mysore, referred to the possibility of State-owned BSNL offering Internet at reasonable prices to counter Free Basics.

Meanwhile, Kalpesh Mehta, founder, Starsoft-India, Mysuru, said that the limited accessibility of Internet through Free Basics gives Facebook control over what its consumers should access.

When there are three e-commerce companies competing with each other, Free Basics will allow only compa-

ny on its platform and deny its consumers access to the other two, he said.

Sudhir Sosale, director, Centre for Training in Advanced Technologies, NIE, Mysuru, said that there was a possibility of Free Basics supporting only one political party during elections.

Even if 30 per cent of the people are on Internet, such discriminative approach gives a huge and undue advantage to the chosen party at the cost of others, he said.

The panel discussion was moderated by Malathi Sriram, Associate Professor, Systems, SDM Institute of Management Development.