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PRESS RELEASE

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DOST Free Wi-fi Project Gets a P3B Upgrade

The Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places project of the Department of Science and Technology's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Office to bring Internet connectivity to class 4, 5, and 6 municipalities in the country recently got a three billion peso upgrade from the Senate and will be a nationwide project.

Originally, the Project was designed to cover only town plazas of 748 class 4, 5 and 6 municipalities, with a budget of 334 million pesos. Last week's budget deliberations in the Senate upgraded the project to have nationwide coverage. The project is now designed to provide not only free Wi-Fi in town plazas in municipalities, but also including transport terminals (train, sea and air), school yards, hospital lobbies, national government agencies, public parks and local government unit offices.

World Bank studies showed that for every 10 percent increase in broadband connectivity results in a 1.38 percent increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to Undersecretary Louis Casambre of the DOST-ICT Office, "any increase in Internet connectivity through "Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places" will jump start economic development by giving access to e-Commerce, e-Learning, and e-Government tools to beneficiaries..." These can increase their incomes and pushing their economic status upwards across the nation, especially those belonging in the countryside.

Casambre also added that most of the countryside is in a "vicious cycle", where most citizens are unable to afford broadband Internet giving little to no incentive for private sector Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to invest in the necessary network infrastructure for lack of an acceptable return on investment." This leads to lack of opportunity to reap the benefits that Internet connectivity has proven to bring.



Internet connectivity and Wi-Fi hotspots to most municipalities for the project will be sourced from the country's Internet Service Providers (ISP), while in areas that do not have broadband connectivity/infrastructure, the DOST ICT Office intends to use TV White Space (TVWS) Technologies which was used to provide last mile connectivity in areas affected by the Bohol earthquake and Typhoon Yolanda. TVWS refers to the vacant frequencies located between broadcast TV channels, which can be used to provide wireless data connectivity to remote communities in the country.

Internet peering advocates are also enthused with the Project as it can significantly improve the speed of Internet access in the country, the Project requires all Internet providers for the free Wi-Fi project to actively peer with PhOpenIX, the country's only third party Internet Exchange, also managed by DOST.

Independent ICT Policy Researcher Mary Grace Mirandilla-Santos , said that, Wi-Fi offloading is a great initiative. The expansion and use of Wi-Fi networks in public areas can bring about better quality of service, especially for the growing number of mobile broadband users. The prerequisite of peering through the PHOpenIX for ISPs who want to participate in the Wi-Fi project can give a boost to the local Internet exchange, provide greater security to government data exchanged through the network, and allow for more efficient use of bandwidth capacity, as local data remain within our national border. If successfully enforced, it is recommended that latency for locally hosted data not take more than 50 ms RTT, the standard used by IDA of Singapore. IP peering allows networks to exchange traffic with each other freely by creating an interconnection between ISPs. Such a connection would allow subscribers and applications of ISPs to pass through a shared domestic Internet exchange point, resulting in improved performance and greater traffic capacity

About DOST-ICT Office - The Information and Communications Technology Office of the Department of Science and Technology is the Philippine Government's lead agency on ICT related matters. Its primary thrusts are in the ICT Industry Development, eGovernment, ICT policy development, Internet for all and Cybersecurity.