

Lula will receive National Broadband proposal on 24th

The special assessor of the presidency of the Republic and coordinator of the Committee of Digital Inclusion for the government, Cezar Alvarez, spoke in this Monday, 16, in the seminary "Alternative for the development of the infrastructure of access in broad band", promoted by Ipea and the Secretariat of Strategic Subjects for the presidency of the Republic. Some aspects of the talk from Alvarez called the attention: the emphasis in the use of the expression massification, and not universalization of broad band; the emphasis on the importance of the partnership with the private companies; the reaffirmation that the infrastructure of state owned fiber-optics will have to be used; and the permanent establishment of one forum for discussion of the subject.

Alvarez advised that next Tuesday, 24, at 15h30, the proposal of the National Plan of Broadband will be discussed with President Lula. Some aspects seem to be definite, however. According to Alvarez, the idea is to articulate, in conjunction with the companies, the construction of the infrastructure that will allow the massification of the broad band. He reiterated a revealed perception already during the Telebrasil Panel that broadband in Brazil is "expensive, slow, concentrated and limited", and to correct this situation they cannot open the access to the 21 thousand km of public fiber-optic networks. "The network of Eletronet will be used for this and not to destroy markets. It is an asset in discussion. If it will be used for the construction and maintenance of the three rings and extension of backbone where the market does not arrive with the necessary promptness and quality, are hypotheses that will be available for the permanent forum with the authorized companies and incumbents", said Alvarez.

The government, said Alvarez, wants contribution and partnership with the telecommunications companies, and says that it does not have resistance to discussing questions about taxes, but pointed out that "this is not the only cause of the price of broadband". The government also signaled that it waits for the availability of the sharing and opening of the networks and said that these questions will be debated in one forum that will have the participant companies, the government, and entities of civil society etc.

Counterproposals

Despite the significantly whitewashing speech with regard to a partnership with incumbents, the tension between government and large companies still did not end. The point of conflict continues to be the lack of a clear proposal, on the part of the entrepreneurs, with relation to the National Broadband Plan. Alvarez confirmed that he has not yet been able met with the large telecommunications companies and had to cancel some set appointments with executives on account of agenda problems. In spite of this, the assessor provoked the telecommunications companies by asking what would be the counteroffer by them to reducing the taxes that the companies desire.

"All discussions have two sides; it goes and it comes back. We are open to discuss the question tax but, on the other hand, what does it gain the Brazilian population? It cannot be to reduce taxes for reducing taxes ", declared Cezar Alvarez. For the special assessor, the operators need to position themselves and the government will not define where they will join in the plan. "They need to define their business case. I cannot define it for them."

In the discussion about tax burden and the politics of new access the forum for debates that will be created in the scope of the implantation of the plan must have a strategic plan. Alvarez pointed out that, of the tax burden of approximately 40% on telecommunications, two thirds are of state taxes (ICMS). The forum must count on participants of the states, beyond representatives of society; the fiscal question certainly will be subject of debates in this group. "There is no way to speak about a Broadband plan without a federative discussion", declared Alvarez regarding the importance that forum will have.

Discrimination

A part of the puzzle of the National Broadband Plan is how to make possible policies of direct subsidy to the consumer. "We must have that discussion about the return of cross subsidies. Why should everyone have that to pay the same price for the same service if the people have different financial situations ", Alvarez commented, indicating an interest of the government in acting in this direction.

It happens that for many years the interpretation of the General Law of Telecommunications (LGT) has taken advantage that the discrimination of customers would not be allowed or that the objectives were to favor the low income with social policies. This analysis was supported by the Casa Civil at that time when it implanted Aice and the Ministry of the Communications tried to propose the Social Telephone as alternative to this service. The initiative of the Ministry of Communications failed due to the power of the Casa Civil had on the LGT.

Also for Alvarez, the discussion was restricted to the case of Aice X Social Telephone. Thus, the assessor signaled that the Casa Civil can have a diverse interpretation when the subject is the differentiation of prices of the broad band and will be able to review its interpretation or to better declare its vision on the limitations of the LGT.

See local news article:

<http://www.teletime.com.br/News.aspx?ID=155576>