Now, we have Green Internet!

More and more companies are powering the Internet with renewable energy

The Internet has transformed our lives. However, increased use of the Internet by consumers, businesses and governments is affecting the environment. As more people around the world get connected, a great deal of electricity is being consumed to power data centre's and telecom networks. This electricity demand is expected to increase by 60% or more by 2020 as the online population rises.

Much of this electricity is generated by burning fossil fuels that emit huge amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. The online population was 300 crore in 2014. Mobile broadband subscriptions are expected to jump to a staggering 760 crore by 2020.

Eco-friendly initiatives

In a new initiative, the Internet is being powered by renewable energy. This is what 'Green Internet' is all about. Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Salesforce, Microsoft, Rackspace, Box, Equinix, Google and other major technology companies are working to completely power the Internet with 100% renewable energy. Amazon Web Services which provides cloud computing services to Fortune 500 companies plans to use wind farm energy.

Google is 100% renewably powered. In fact, Google minimizes electricity usage at its data centres by locating them in areas where natural climate resources can offset the heat produced by its computer servers. Apple Inc has built four solar farms and now runs its entire data centre's on renewable energy. Facebook decided to locate a data centre in Iowa, US, driving the largest purchase of wind turbines in the world.

Illuminating report

According to a 2014 study by Greenpeace International, called 'Clicking Clean: A Guide to Building the Green Internet', technology companies have immense power to either drive a renewable energy revolution, or chain the new digital economy to old, polluting sources of power. The stakes are high: if the Internet were a country, its electricity demand would currently rank sixth, says the report. Imagine the scenario if the energy associated with devices is included!

Gary Cook, lead author of the study commented that individual Internet users can also make a difference. "You can choose products that are energy efficient, and really think about whether you need a new model every two years. It is also important that consumers keep pushing companies to do more with renewable energy."

Sources: Span May-June 2015, www.huffingtonpost.com, www.cloudbus.org