

# Facebook CEO defends effort to expand Internet access

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Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg interacts with technology students in a town hall-style meeting in New Delhi, India, Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2015. Zuckerberg is his second visit to India this year alone. (Shirish Shete/Press Trust of India via AP)

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg defended his company's contentious efforts to expand Internet access in the developing world during his second visit to India this year.

The company's free platform offering a basic level of Internet access via

Android devices has been introduced to 24 countries and has amassed about 15 million users, mostly in Africa and Asia, Zuckerberg said at a meeting Wednesday with students.

He said it could help alleviate poverty in India by providing information to the poor and contributing to development of the economy.

The platform known as Free Basics was developed in conjunction with other [technology companies](#) and has brought a mixed response from governments and analysts. Many criticize it for lacking transparency in how information is selected for the site and favoring Facebook's own services over those of competitors.

Zuckerberg rejected the criticism as a luxury of those who can afford access to the Internet. He said limiting content on the Free Basics platform was necessary, because "you cannot provide the whole Internet for free." It was initially known as Internet.org.

There are about 300 million people using the Internet in India, including 130 million using Facebook, making India the company's second-largest user base behind the United States.

But there are still about 1 billion Indians with no Internet access.

"We deeply care about servicing the Indian community and giving them the best tools. That's why I want to be here," said Zuckerberg.

Last month, Zuckerberg hosted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a Silicon Valley town hall meeting, at which Modi also touted the power of social media in economic development by helping people to share knowledge and ideas.

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