



INTELLIGENT NETWORK SERVICES

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Intelligent Network Services in Multi-Operator and Multi-Network Scenario (Amendment) Regulations, 2010

TRAI sent its recommendations on “Provision of Calling Cards by Long Distance Operators” to the Department of Telecommunications (“DOT”) that license conditions of the NLD and ILD license may be amended to allow NLDOs and ILDOs to have direct access to consumers, through calling cards, for provision of national and international voice telephony services, respectively. These recommendations were adopted, subsequent to which the NLDOs and ILDO became eligible to issue calling cards for NLD (STD) calls and ILD (ISD) calls. TRAI noted that Intelligent Network Services in Multi-Operator Multi Service Scenario Regulations, 2006 issued on November 27, 2006 (“IN regulations”) to facilitate the subscribers of an access provider to access the IN Services provided by any other service provider requires amendment. Accordingly, the Intelligent Network Services in Multi-Operator and Multi-Network Scenario (Amendment) Regulations, 2010 was issued. Regulations 10(2), (4) and (6) of the IN regulations give the provisions relating to time period of entering into agreement and submission of the same to the Authority. It has been noted that there is no specific time frame in the IN regulations for the service providers who become eligible to provide IN services subsequent to the date of issue of IN regulations.

PSA view – Amendment to the IN regulations was necessary so that service providers could enter into agreement with all other service providers who are already providing IN based services or would start IN based services at a later date in a time bound manner in the consumer interest. The amendment to IN regulations proposes that service providers who are already providing IN services should enter into agreement with all access providers within 90 days of the date of amendment and those service providers who start IN services at later date should enter into agreement within 90 days of start of the IN services.

* **Audit of the billing system of telecom service providers**

TRAI has decided to probe and investigate the growing complaints of overcharging by telecom service providers, and accordingly invited technical auditing firms to submit their expression of interest to check the metering and billing accuracy. Through this audit, TRAI intends to ensure that the service providers have the technology and softwares in place to ensure that the automated billing is as per the plan chosen by the customer. Some of the processes that will require a thorough audit are **(a) Guiding**– This ensures that the calls are directly matched to the plan opted by the user. The start and end time of the call is noted and the

call charge is determined based on the calling plan; **(b) Rating**– This software applies a “rate” to the call without considering any discount, special schemes, etc., and **(c) Call Data Records**– The main purpose of this software is to ensure that the start and end time of a call between the originating and terminating number is properly recorded. This is an important software as it determines the final duration of the call and “guides” it to the opted plan for determining the “rate.”

PSA view – This initiative by TRAI is much to the satisfaction of customers who, besides filing a consumer complaint, had no forum for a speedy redressal. A technical audit of the softwares used by the service provider is necessary for a transparent billing mechanism. Many a times the same software is used for different billing plans and even the slightest change in the programming of the software results to incorrect billing. The audit will check whether these softwares are running properly and in compliance with the telecom service regulations. We recommend that the technical audit report of each service provider also be submitted to the statutory auditors of these companies, who then base their report not only on the financial data and findings, but also on the technical analysis of the softwares and programmes used by the company. This will create a system of dual transparency, which is necessary in the competitive telecom sector.



* **Telecom towers: a renewable step forward**

DOT has proposed running telecom towers on solar energy, instead of diesel on which they presently operate. A panel has been constituted that will submit draft guidelines and suggest means to promote and use renewable energy for running the towers. With the exponential growth of mobile users in the country, the need to set up new towers is also on the rise. Therefore, it is important to start considering renewable energy sources to preserve the non-renewable sources and also to cut down on the high running cost of diesel.

PSA view – Running telecom towers on solar energy is positive step. Besides conserving fuel and cutting down cost, it will cut down on carbon emissions. The companies running these towers can also seek to apply for carbon credits. This move will also boost setting up of telecom towers in villages and small towns where access to continuous diesel fuel is sparse. In the longer run, use of solar energy for operating the towers will ensure greater mobile penetration and open a wider market for revenue generation for the interested players.



* **ASCI to release advertising guidelines on advertisements for the education sector**

The ASCI had earlier released the draft guidelines for regulating the advertisements in the education sector. The rationale behind the draft guidelines is to protect the interests of the public and prevent false and exaggerated claims from being made by organizations and institutions offering coaching classes and educational programmes.

PSA view – The draft guidelines released by the ASCI are quite brief and focus primarily on the contents of the advertisement. The guidelines clearly and expressly provide that no exaggerated claims be made for courses offered, which in turn will prevent any claim of accreditation or a guarantee securing placements from being made to induce students to apply to the particular course, unless backed substantially with evidence. However, the guidelines do not provide what would constitute adequate evidence for making such claims. Organizations and institutions may tend to lean towards studies which favor them or may also commission studies to show that the course being offered has high prospects. As the guidelines have not

been brought into force yet, the ASCI should consider making comprehensive guidelines on advertisements for the education sector, in order to fulfill the aim of protecting the interests of the public.

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