



TRAI ISSUES "ISSUES RELATED TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY"

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January 2011

Given the vigorous growth in the telecom sector and the urgent requirement of an apposite infrastructure for its sustainable growth, TRAI released on January 14, a consultation paper on "Issues Related to Telecommunications Infrastructure Policy." On 5th February 2010, a pre-consultation paper was issued by the TRAI on issues relating to tower infrastructure for obtaining views of the stakeholders. Based on the comments received and further review of earlier recommendations, the scope of the current consultation paper has been enlarged to cover the entire gamut of telecom infrastructure to collectively discuss, debate and finalize measures required. The consultation paper takes up the following important issues for deliberations: (i) Telecom infrastructure classification and details with accent on policy issues that need to be consulted upon; (ii) Framework relating to Mobile Virtual Network Operators; (iii) Setting up of National Internet Exchange Points; (iv) Issues relating to telecom tower infrastructure and (v) Issues relating to Rural telephony, migration to IPv6 and IPTV

PSA view – The telecommunication sector is a major contributor towards the Indian national economy. There has been a considerable growth in the number of subscribers in India which is expected to reach 1 billion by 2014. This growth is supported by a robust telecom infrastructure. However, in absence or lack of infrastructure can deal a crippling blow to the aspirations of providing a reliable, high quality, world-class infrastructure to the citizens of the country. It follows that for a comprehensive and inclusive growth of the country a sound infrastructure development policy is indispensable.

Direct-to-home services opt for cost cutting measures

Direct-to-home ("DTH") service providers are keen on following the telecom tower-sharing model as is followed by various telecom operators. This will result in existing transponders being used by more than one DTH service provider to beam channels. Presently, satellite transponders are not in abundant supply and therefore DTH operators have to often incur heavy costs to lease an independent tower. Therefore, the tower-sharing model is expected to bring some respite to the loss making DTH industry

PSA view – The tower-sharing model is certainly cost effective and provides some level of insurance against any risk that the operator might have to incur if an independently operated tower fails to function or develops a technical snag. Interestingly, this might be the DTH sector's first step towards industry consolidation as sharing of transponders will mean making heavy investments in technical collaborations. Presently, most DTH operators use different operating technology, but in order to share transponders they will have to collaborate to use the same technology in their set-top box. This is expected to have serious ramifications on

the DTH industry as customers would then be able to change their operator without having to incur additional cost on a new set-top box. Nevertheless, such a move was required for the prevailing DTH players to start planning an expansion drive by providing new high quality channels.

Telemarketer registration to commence mid-January

TRAI has recently through a Press Release released the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2010 for registration and regulation of telemarketers, both existing and new. The main objective of this regulation is to ensure that consumers do not get promotional communication from commercial or other establishments unless they have specifically opted for receiving them. Once the registration process is commenced, advertisers and commercial establishments will only be able to utilize the services of a registered telemarketer, and this will also allow a close monitoring so that the use of telemarketing is done only to reach customers who have opted to be solicited by such calls. The registration process calls for the telemarketer (which can be a firm, company or individual) to provide a few details such as PAN number etc and contact address, the purpose of which presumable is to ensure compliance with the regulations.

PSA view – The procedure for registration of telemarketers is relatively simple and straightforward. It is a good move by the TRAI to seek information from the telemarketer such as contact address and PAN number etc which will discourage the abuse of the NCPR database. This is a novel method for regulating solicitation calls going to individual consumers to provide services and is now recognized as a media to reach the consumers itself apart from print and television. However, only time will allow an actual assessment of whether the registration process contributes to the effective regulation of the telemarketing calls, and reduction in harassment of individual consumers.

By:

Neeraj Dubey

Ashutosh Chandola

Dhruv Suri



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