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TESTING LABORATORIES FOR IT PRODUCTS

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Testing laboratories for IT products

The Indian government is all set to establish 15 new laboratories for testing IT (both hardware and software) products under the PPP model having national and international accreditation and recognitions in the area of testing and calibration. With 15 new laboratories, the total number of such laboratories will rise to 20 as there are already five such laboratories in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore and Noida. These laboratories fall within the aegis of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology. It will allow the IT companies to test their products in the laboratories before marketing them in India. The products will have to be registered in accordance with the safety standards for such products prescribed by the government. These laboratories would be part of Standardization Testing and Quality Certification and their services would include testing, calibration, IT and e-Governance, training and certification to public and private organizations.

PSA view – As proposed, the testing laboratories will work in a similar way the Automotive Research Association of India works in Pune, which provides certification to all cars. This system will promote innovation and supply of only tested and qualified equipments in the Indian market.

New directive for broadband service providers on fair usage policy

The TRAI issued a new directive to telecom broadband service providers to deliver internet services in a more transparent manner, providing sufficient information to customers. The service providers have been asked specifically to provide sufficient information to customers about various existing plans and the applicable fair usage policy and generally to (i) ensure that the connection speed does not go below the minimum specified speed; (ii) alert subscribers whenever their data usage reaches 80% and 100% of the data usage limit, in their respective plans; (iii) refrain from misleading tariff advertisements; (iv) disclose all material information clearly in their ads as well as publish a URL to their website and customer care numbers; (v) refrain from using the term "unlimited" unless it offers true unlimited service without any data cap or speed throttling, since putting a fair usage or daily/monthly limit on an unlimited plan would amount to misleading the consumers.

PSA view – TRAI has finally taken some considerable steps in regard to the issues concerning the services provided by the broadband service providers. A majority of the Indian ISPs tempt consumers with attractive

tariffs and high broadband speeds with a fine print, without conveying fair usage limits to subscribers in a transparent manner. This directive may put them on alert while making offers.

Implementing location accuracy

The telecom companies were given the deadline to implement the location accuracy of 50 m, which they failed to achieve. This has instigated the government to revise the location accuracy percentage and distance for which the telecom operators have to maintain location details of its mobile customers. Now the telecom operators have to implement location based services: (i) In urban areas, a 30% location accuracy in >50 m, 60% accuracy in >100 m and 80% accuracy in >300 m by the end of the first year and should improve to 50%, 75% and 95%, by the end of the second year; (ii) In sub-urban and rural areas, a 50% location accuracy in >300 m and 60% accuracy in >500 m by the end of the first year and 60% and 75% by the end of the second year and reach 70% and 80% by the end of the third year; (iii) In remote areas, a 50% in >300 m and 60% >500 m by the end of the second year and 60% in >300 m and 70% in >500 m by the end of the third year. Further, the companies are required to provide location details to customers as a part of the call detail record ("CDR"). This shall be in the form of longitude and latitude and co-ordinates of the cell sites in CDR. Beginning with specific phone numbers, this should be made available to all mobile phones by the end of the third year i.e. May 2014.

PSA view – The Cellular Operators Association of India has come up with the suggestion that the implementation cost for these location based services should be borne by the government. The implementation would take a lot of time as the companies do not have the adequate support or technology to accomplish this task.

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