

# Trai Floats Paper Seeking Views on Consumer Issues

Feedback sought on consumer problems in case of termination of telecom services

Our Bureau

**Kolkata:** The telecom regulator has floated a new discussion paper seeking clarity on issues faced by consumers, typically, when operators need to switch off networks due to changes in licencing rules, discontinuation of a particular mobile technology or even the advent of spectrum trading.

In a consultation paper issued Wednesday, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has sought views from stakeholders on whether the notice period to subscribers in case of a services closure needs to be enhanced from 30 days to 60 days to give customers enough time to use up their talktime balance.

It has also sought views on whether a telco needs to give such 60 days advance notice to customers, the telecom department (DoT) and Trai if it is selling airwaves in

a particular circle and shutting down operations.

The regulator has also sought industry feedback on whether a telco migrating customers to a newer mobile technology should offer them tariff protection and carry-over of unused talk-time balance. "The Authority, suo-motu, decided to examine these issues through a consultation paper as there have been cases where due to changes in policy of assignment of licence, trading of spectrum or upgradation of a (mobile) technology, there has been discontinuity of services to subscribers," the Trai said.

The sector regulator has also invited suggestions from telcos on the ideal mode of communicating a services closure to subscribers.

This apart, Trai has sought industry views on whether there is a need to tweak licensing regulations for telcos who have liberalised airwaves originally acquired through the administrative route. Liberalising has to do with paying the market price for airwaves that were originally allotted and not auctioned. Trai has also sought stakeholder suggestions on how much time customers should be given to port out, post-closure of commercial services by a telco.

## Telecom Sector Attracts FDI worth \$10B in 8 Months

**Kolkata:** The telecom sector has attracted over \$10 billion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the first eight months of 2016-17, which is nearly four times the levels scaled last fiscal, but the country is lagging on the broadband connectivity front, senior government officials said Wednesday at an Assocham event on e-governance in Delhi.

Telecom Secretary JS Deepak said, "FDI levels had jumped in the first eight months, which vindicated that the telecom sector reforms heralded by the government have got a resounding acknowledgement".

"Broadband connectivity is a key component of digital infrastructure, and this is an area where a lot of work needs to be done," said Trai chairman RS Sharma.

--Our Bureau

# Poor broadband penetration can derail Digital India: Trai

## 'Demonetisation A Catalyst But Connectivity Must Improve'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Broadband penetration in India is below par and needs to be boosted to make the Modi government's ambitious 'Digital India' programme a success, telecom regulator R S Sharma said on Wednesday.

While the de-monetisation measure is acting as a catalyst in fuelling digital transactions, serious efforts are required to increase broadband connectivity beyond the current level of 7%, Sharma said at an event on eGovernance and Digital India, organised by industry chamber Assocham.

"There is one area where we need to do a lot of work and that area is broadband



INDIA BEHIND VIETNAM

connectivity," Sharma said, adding that as per a white paper, Thailand's broadband reach (connectivity) is estimated at 36%, Singapore's at 98% and that of Malaysia at

around 35-36%. India has been ranked behind Sri Lanka and Vietnam in broadband penetration. "This is really a matter of concern...We are not in a great shape as far as broadband penetration is concerned ...Digital India will have to ride on this infrastructure and if we don't have robust and reliable infrastructure, we are not going to achieve the objective of digital India, a digitally-empowered society and knowledge economy," Sharma said as he made a strong pitch for using cable TV infrastructure for broadband delivery.

Broadband through cable TV — that reaches millions of homes — would only require tweaking of the policy

and Trai has already given its recommendation to the government in this regard.

"Our ranking will zoom up. There are millions of cable TV homes and by December 31, all these will be digitised. That can be leveraged. In many of developed countries like US and in Europe, nearly 50-60% of robust broadband is coming from digital cable TV. We need to do that," Sharma said.

On demonetisation being a catalyst for digitisation, Sharma said: "Certainly, in the last two weeks or so, there has been an acceleration of digital transactions." Cashless society or less-cash society, is the aim of digital India, he said, adding that "this is accelerating already".

# Telecom sector gets \$10bn FDI

**New Delhi:** The Indian telecom sector has received foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$10 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal, telecom secretary J S Deepak said here on Wednesday.

"The telecom sector reforms have got a resounding acknowledgement. The FDI which was \$1.3 billion in 2014-15, \$2.9 billion in 2015-16 has jumped up to more than \$10 billion in the first eight months of 2016-17," Deepak said. He was addressing the 12th National Summit e-Governance and Digital India organised by Assocham.

Talking about Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD)-based mobile banking transactions, Deepak said: "There is not only a need to popularise USSD, but there is a need to simplify it. We need to work on a push USSD rather than a pull USSD".

The USSD service is used by people using feature phones to check the balance in their bank accounts and

transfer money. At a time when the country is undergoing a demonetisation drive of higher denomination Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes, every day more and more people are logging into online payment modes and online banking transactions.

"The merchants should be able to push in a message to feature phone users wherein you just have to okay it for a transaction and goes back to

## IN 8 MONTHS

the banks. The burden of enabling IFSC (Indian Financial System Code) and other should move from the payers to the recipient," the secretary added. The sectoral regulator — Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) — has recently lowered the USSD tariff to a maximum of 50 paise per transaction, from the earlier rate of Rs 1.50 per session. He also said 97% of the population in India is on 2G and 68 per cent on 3G telephony. AGENCIES

# Regulator worried over low broadband penetration impacting Digital India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, November 30

Telecom regulator TRAI has said demonetisation has accelerated digital transactions in the country, but expressed concern over India trailing nations like Singapore and Malaysia at the level of broadband connectivity, a key component of digital infrastructure.

"There is one area where we need to do a lot of work and that area is broadband connectivity," TRAI Chairman RS Sharma said.

He said at an event on e-Governance and Digital India organised by Assocham that as per a white-paper, "broadband penetration in India was 7 per cent, based on certain parameters".

On the other hand, it had pegged Thailand's broadband reach at 36 per cent, Singapore's at 98 and that of Malaysia at around 35-36 per cent, he said. India was, in fact, ranked behind Sri Lanka and Vietnam in broadband penetration, he added.

"This is really a matter of con-



Broadband penetration in India is 7 per cent, based on certain parameters

cern...We are not in a great shape as far as broadband penetration is concerned...Digital India will have to ride on this infrastructure and if we don't have robust and reliable infrastructure, we are not going to achieve the objective of digital India, of having a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy," Sharma said, making a strong case for using cable TV for broadband delivery.

Broadband through cable TV — beaming into millions of Indian

homes — would only require tweaking of the policy and TRAI has already given its recommendation to the Centre in this regard.

"Our ranking will zoom up. There are millions of cable TV homes and by 31 December all these will be digitised. That can be leveraged. In many of developed countries like US and in Europe nearly 50-60 per cent of robust broadband is coming from digital cable TV. We need to do that," he

said. Highlighting the role that Bharat Net project will play in strengthening the digital infrastructure, he said industry, government and the regulator will have to work together in taking India higher than its ranking of 131-132 among 155 nations in ICT penetration.

On demonetisation being a catalyst for digitisation, Sharma said: "Certainly, in the last two weeks or so there has been an acceleration digital transactions."

Cashless society or, in the short term less-cash society, is the aim of digital India, he said; adding that "this is accelerating already".

Both TRAI and Telecom Department called for making the mobile short code or USSD facility — used to avail banking services on feature phones — more simple and user-friendly.

"We need to work on push USSD, where the burden of pressing keys and pulling codes should move from the payer to merchant," Telecom Secretary JS Deepak said.

## Telecom sector got \$10 b FDI in 2016-17: official

### INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, November 30

The Indian telecom sector has received foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$10 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal, Telecom Secretary JS Deepak said here on Wednesday.

"The telecom sector reforms have got a resounding acknowledgement. The FDI which was \$1.3 billion in 2014-15, \$2.9 billion in 2015-16 has jumped up to more than \$10 billion in the first eight months of 2016-17," Deepak said.

He was addressing the 12th National Summit e-Governance and Digital India organised by ASSOCHAM.

### Push for simplification

Talking about Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD)-based mobile banking transactions, Deepak said: "There is not only a need to popularise USSD, but there is a need to simplify it. We need to work on a push USSD rather than a pull USSD."

The USSD service is used by people using feature phones to check the balance in their bank accounts and transfer money.

At a time when the country is undergoing a demonetisation drive of higher denomination ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes, every day more and more people are logging into online payment modes and online banking transactions.

"The merchants should be able to push a message to feature phone users wherein you just have to okay it for a transaction and goes back to the banks. The burden of enabling IFSC (Indian Financial System Code) and other should move from the payers to the recipient," the secretary added.

The sectoral regulator – Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) – has recently lowered the USSD tariff to a maximum of 50 paise per transaction, from the earlier rate of ₹1.50 per session.

He also said 97 per cent of the population in India is on 2G and 68 per cent on 3G telephony.

