TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

E-NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

Dr. P.D. Vaghela, Chairman, TRAI, visited Samsung 'The World's largest Mobile Factory in India' at NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, along with Secretary, TRAI, and senior officers on 18th September 2021

1. Recommendations

1.1 Recommendations on 'Enabling Unbundling of Different Layers Through Differential Licensing' dated 19th August 2021

DoT, through its letter dated 8th May 2019, inter-alia, requested TRAI to furnish recommendations on enabling unbundling of different layers through differential licensing.

On this subject, a pre-Consultation Paper was released on 9th December 2019, and subsequently, a detailed Consultation Paper was released on 20th August 2020.

Based on the comments/inputs received from the stakeholders and on its own analysis, the Authority sent its Recommendations on **"Enabling Unbundling of Different Layers Through Differential Licensing"** to the Government on 19th August 2021.

These recommendations aim to create a separate license authorization for Access Network providers and provide a broad framework for VNO(s) seeking and entering into an agreement with the Network providers. Implementation of these recommendations are likely to result in increased sharing of network resources, reduction of cost, attracting investments, strengthening the service delivery segment, and could also prove to be the catalyst in the proliferation of 5G services for Industry 4.0, enterprise segment, and various other use cases, in a localized manner.

The salient features of these recommendations are:

i. A separate authorization under Unified License should be created for Access Network Provider (network layer) to provide network services on a wholesale basis.

ii. The scope of the Access Network Provider shall be to establish and maintain access network, including wireless and wireline access network, and sell the network services (capable of carrying voice and non-voice messages and data) on a wholesale basis to VNOs (service delivery operators) for retailing purpose. The Access Network Provider should be permitted to have capabilities to support all the services mentioned in the scope of Access Service authorization under Unified License (UL).

iii. The Access Network provider should also be permitted to provide/share its network resources to/with the telecom service providers who are licensees under section 4 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and vice versa.

iv. Licensed service area for Access Network Provider should be kept same as that existing in access service authorization under UL.

v. Access Network provider should be responsible for all the network-related terms and conditions specified in the Access Service Authorization under Unified License. However, the terms and conditions related to service delivery should be excluded.

vi. Like Unified Licensee with access authorization, the Access Network provider should also be permitted to acquire spectrum through spectrum auctions, subjected to the prescribed spectrum caps, enter into spectrum trading and spectrum sharing arrangement with the other Access Network providers and unified licensees with access authorization. It should also have access to the backhaul spectrum, numbering resources, and the right to interconnection.

vii. The existing licensing regime of Unified License shall be continued. However, if a licensee with Access Service Authorization under UL wishes to migrate to a segregated network layer and service layer regime, it should be permitted to do so.

viii. The Network Provider shall be permitted to take a separate license under UL(VNO) framework for the provision of services to the end subscribers.

The recommendations on **"Enabling Unbundling of Different Layers Through Differential Licensing"** have been placed on TRAI's website www.trai.gov.in.

https://trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/Recommendation_19082021.pdf

1.2 Recommendations on "Licensing Framework for Satellite based connectivity for low bit rate applications" dated 26th August 2021

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), through its letter dated 23rd November 2020, has requested TRAI to furnish recommendations on Licensing framework to enable the provisioning of satellite-based connectivity for low bit-rate applications for both commercial and captive usage. Considering the constraints of the existing provisions in respect of proposed satellite-based low bit-rate services, DoT has stated that there is a need for a suitable licensing framework and requested TRAI to examine all the factors holistically and recommend enabling provisions under the existing licensing framework of DoT, or new licensing framework may be suggested for such services for both commercial and captive usage.

Low bit-rate applications and IoT devices require low cost, low power, and small-size terminals that can effectively perform the task of signal transfer with minimum loss. Many sparsely populated areas with important economic activities suited for IoT-related services may not have terrestrial coverage or other forms of connectivity. Therefore,

satellites can help bridge this gap by providing coverage to even the most remote areas and will help in fulfilling connect India mission.

Based on the reference received from DoT, Consultation Paper on "'Licensing Framework for Satellite based connectivity for low bit rate applications." was issued on 12th March 2021, seeking comments of the stakeholders. The consultation paper covered the issues related to different models of provision of satellite-based connectivity, various orbits, frequency bands for Low Bit Rate applications, availability of satellite capacities, and enabling requirements in licensing framework.

Based on the comments/inputs received from the stakeholders and on its own analysis, the Authority on 26th August 2021 sent its Recommendations on **"Licensing Framework for Satellite based connectivity for low bit rate applications."**

The salient features of these recommendations are:

a. For the provision of satellite-based connectivity for IoT and low-bit-rate applications, the relevant service licensees may provide connectivity as per the scope of their authorization for any kind of network topology model, including a hybrid model, aggregator model, and direct-to-satellite model.
b. All types of satellite viz. Geo Stationary Orbit (GSO) and Non-GSO (NGSO) satellites and any of the permitted satellite frequency bands may be used for providing satellite-based low-bit-rate connectivity.
c. The relevant existing authorizations under the Unified Licensing framework may be suitably amended for enabling satellite-based low-bit-rate connectivity.
d. Scope of authorizations of GMPCS service, Commercial VSAT CUG service, and NLD service under Unified License and Captive VSAT CUG service license may be suitably amended to include the provision of satellite-based low-bit-rate connectivity for IoT devices.
e. The service licensees should be permitted to obtain satellite bandwidth from foreign satellites in all the permitted satellite bands to provide satellite-based services.
f. The Authority has recommended various measures to make the services cheaper and affordable like permitting the hiring of foreign capacities for a longer period as per need instead of 3-5 years, removal of facilitation charges by the government when hiring foreign capacities from the approved list of foreign satellites/satellite systems, leasing the satellite capacity directly from the chosen foreign satellite, reducing the role of intermediaries and removing the prevailing NOCC charges.
g. To improve Ease of Doing Business (EoDB), it has also been recommended that DoT should put in place a comprehensive, simplified, integrated, end-to-end coordinated, single window online common portal for all the agencies involved in the grant of various approvals/permissions/allocations, etc., like DoS, DOT, WPC, and NOCC, wherein the service licensees can place their request and the agencies respond online in a transparent and time-bound manner. All the guidelines, applications forms, fee details, processes, timelines, and application status should be made transparently available on the portal.

The recommendations on **"Licensing Framework for Satellite based connectivity for low bit rate applications."** have been placed on TRAI's website: www.trai.gov.in.

https://trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/Recommendations_26082021.pdf

1.3 Recommendations on 'Roadmap to Promote Broadband Connectivity and Enhanced Broadband speed' dated 31st August 2021.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had issued Recommendations on '**Roadmap to Promote Broadband Connectivity and Enhanced Broadband speed**' dated 31st August 2021. These recommendations are the culmination of responses to different references received from DoT on broadband.
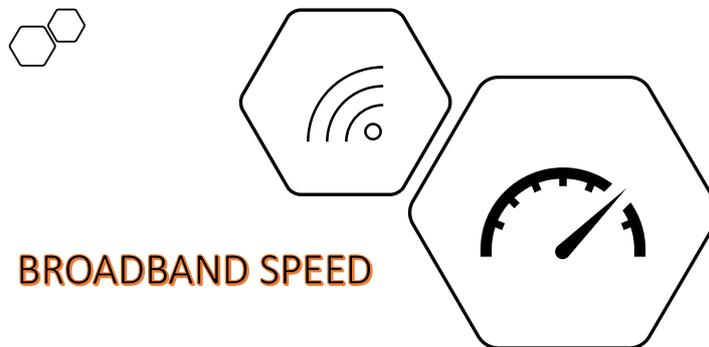
BROADBAND SPEED

2. The salient features of the recommendations are as follows:

(i) Definition of broadband has been reviewed and the minimum download speed for broadband connectivity is revised upward from the present 512Kbps to 2Mbps. Based on download speed, fixed broadband has been categorized into three different categories - Basic, Fast, and Super-fast.

(ii) To encourage lakhs of cable operators to provide broadband services, the Authority's past recommendation on "Definition of Revenue Base (AGR) for the Reckoning of Licence Fee and Spectrum Usage Charges" has been reiterated.

(iii) To enhance mobile broadband speed in rural and remote areas by fiberisation of the cellular networks, backhaul connectivity on optical fiber using the BharatNet network with Service-Level Agreements (SLA) should be made available to service providers.

(iv) To incentivise investment in the last-mile linkage for fixed-line broadband, notify a skill development plan and an interest subvention scheme for Cable Operators registered as micro- and small-sized enterprises.

(v)   To enhance mobile broadband speed, the radio spectrum used for backhauling connectivity of cellular networks should be assigned to service providers on-demand and in a time-bound manner.

(vi)   Creation of National Portal for RoW permissions to facilitate the expeditious rollout of telecom and other essential utilities infrastructure.

(vii)   Incentivize establishment of common ducts and posts for fiberisation of networks. In line with BhartNet Project, exempt RoW charges for the next five years for expeditious laying of common ducts and posts.

(viii)   A Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) to incentivize States/UTs for RoW reforms. Incentives to be linked to the net improvement in the Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) score of a State/UT.

(ix)   Mandates co-deployment of common ducts during the construction of any roadway, railway, and water and gas pipelines receiving public funding.

(x)   To facilitate the sharing of passive infrastructure such as ducts, optical fibers, posts, etc., all the passive infrastructure available in the country should be mapped by each service provider and infrastructure provider using Geographic Information System (GIS). The Telecom Engineering Center (TEC) should notify the standards for this purpose. Establishment of e-marketplace on a common GIS platform to facilitate leasing and trading of passive infrastructure.

(xi)   Target linked incentive, i.e., License Fee (LF) exemption on specified revenues to eligible licensees for the proliferation of fixed-line broadband services in urban and rural areas.

(xii)   A pilot DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) scheme in rural areas for the proliferation of fixed-line broadband subscribers. After ascertaining the practicability of the pilot DBT scheme in accelerating the growth of fixed-line broadband services, specifics of the DBT scheme like eligibility criteria for beneficiaries, the quantum of benefit, period of the scheme, etc., to be worked out subsequently.

https://trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/Recommendations_31082021.pdf

2. Important Events

A function for Hindi Diwas 2021 was organized virtually under the Chairmanship of Dr. P D Vaghela, Chairman, TRAI, on 14th September 2021

3. Telecom Subscriptions

3.1 Telecom Subscription Data as on 31st July 2021.

Particulars	Wireless	Wireline	Total
Urban Telephone subscribers (Millions)	650.10	20.65	670.75
Rural Telephone subscribers (Millions)	536.74	1.96	538.70
Total Telephone subscribers (Millions)	**1186.84**	**22.61**	**1209.45**
Overall Tele-density (%)	86.85	1.65	88.51
Share of Urban Subscription (%)	54.78	91.32	55.46
Share of Rural Subscription (%)	45.22	8.68	44.54
No. of Broadband Subscribers (Million)	784.59	24.01	808.60

Active wireless subscribers on the date of Peak VLR in July 2021 were 989.34 million.

In July 2021, 10.99 million subscriber requests were made for MNP. By the end of July 2021, a total of 616.87 million consumers have availed the MNP facility since its implementation.

3.2 Panel of Auditors (Updated List) to carry out audit of Digital Addressable Systems (DAS) dated 30th August 2021

TRAI releases updated list of panel of auditors to carry out digital addressable systems from time to time. In this context, TRAI released the updated list for panel of auditors on 30th August 2021.

https://trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/Audit_List_30082021_0.pdf

4. Events

4.1 The following Consumer Outreach Programmes were organised during August 2021 through the online platform:

Sl. No.	Place	Date
1	Uttarakhand	5th August 2021
2	Maharashtra	6th August 2021
3	Dhanbad City, Jharkhand	10th August 2021
4	Gujarat	13th August 2021
5	Telangana	17th August 2021
6	Malda Town (WB)	24th August 2021
7	Haryana	27th August 2021

PHOTO GALLERY

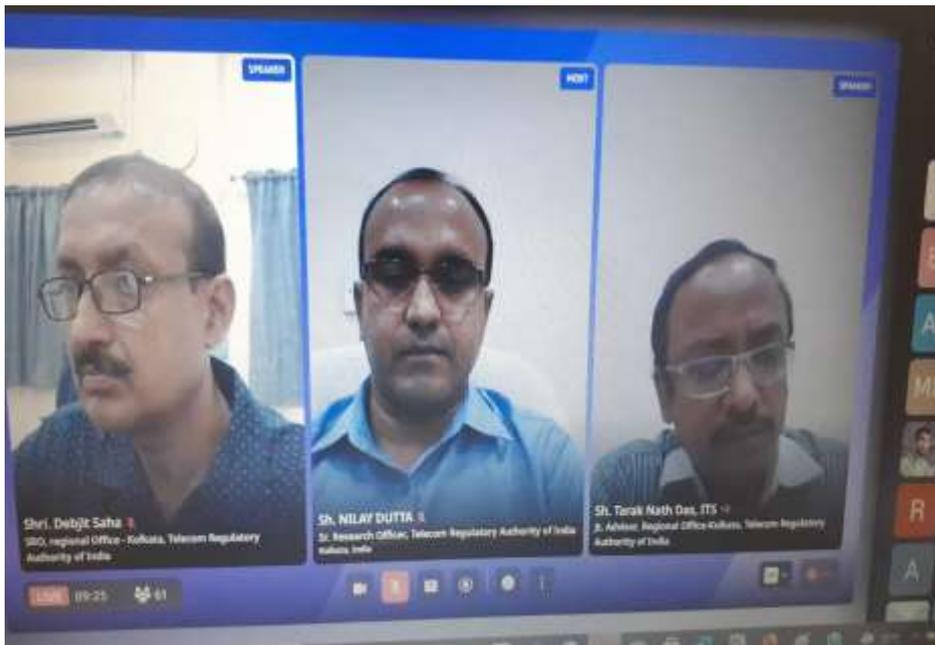**CoP for Uttarakhand held on 5th August 2021**

CoP for Dhanbad City, Jharkhand, held on 10th August 2021

CoP for Gujarat held on 13th August 2021

CoP for Telangana held on 17ᵗʰ August 2021

CoP for Malda Town (WB) held on 24ᵗʰ August 2021

CoP for Haryana held on 27ᵗʰ August 2021

Full details of the Directions/Orders/Consultation Paper/Report, Subscription Data, etc mentioned in this newsletter are available on TRAI website
www.trai.gov.in
Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhawan, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, (Old Minto Road), New Delhi-110 002.

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