

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:817

ANSWERED ON:24.02.2006

POLICY ON CONVERGENCE

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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether TRAI has brought out a consultation paper on issues relating to convergence and competition in Broadcasting and Telecommunications;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of inputs received by TRAI from various stakeholders; and
- (d) the time by which a comprehensive policy is likely to be finalized and announced?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. TRAI has issued a Consultation Paper on `Convergence and competition in Broadcasting and Telecommunications` on 2.1.2006 soliciting comments from various stakeholders.

The Consultation Paper is focused on the need to bring about convergence in different aspects of regulation of telecommunications and broadcasting industries. The issues for consultation listed in paper include:-

Need for comprehensive legal framework for promoting convergence;

Possible changes in unified licensing;

Approach towards spectrum allocation;

Rationalisation of custom duties; and issues relating to technologies,

Institutional funding, FDI limits and Right of Way etc.

(c) The comments of various stakeholders have been received on issues listed for consultation by TRAI. Stakeholders have inter-alia suggested for a comprehensive legal framework for entire electronic communication and network services on the lines of Communication Convergence Bill 2001 with emphasis on level playing field. The suggestions also include a framework able to deal with the emerging technology in addition to the existing one.

On Unified Licensing Issue, stakeholders have suggested for a technology neutral regime ensuring fair treatment and providing unencumbered opportunity for growth of content and carriage industry. Entry of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), broadcasting and cable operators into voice services has also been recommended along with need to consider interconnection of broadcasting and cable TV etc.

On the spectrum related issues, the suggestions include flexible spectrum allocation encouraging spectrum trading, auctioning of spectrum and check on the usage of spectrum. Other suggestions include rationalization of Custom duties is to provide a level playing field between telecom service providers and cable operators, permission to terminate call on the Customer Permise Equipments (CPEs). There are divergent views on concept of Institutional Funding.

The details of inputs received by TRAI have been posted on the website of TRAI at www.traai.gov.in.

(d) Based on the inputs received from various stakeholders, TRAI proposed to hold two Open House Discussions on the issue, after which it will send appropriate proposals/recommendations to the Government. Hence at present no definite time frame can be stipulated for finalization of comprehensive policy on convergence.