



Interoperable Set Top Boxes: TRAI

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Why in News

Recently, the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India** (TRAI) has recommended that all **Set Top Boxes (STBs)** in the country **must be made interoperable**.

It means that consumers should be able to use the **same STB across different DTH (direct-to-home) or cable TV providers**.

Key Points

- **STBs** deployed in the cable **TV networks** are **non-interoperable**. STBs in the **DTH players** comply with **licence conditions to support common interface module based interoperability**. So, in practice, they are also not readily interoperable.
- **Issues** due to the lack of interoperability:
 - It deprives the customer of the **freedom to change** her/his service provider.
 - Creates a **hindrance to technological innovation** and improvement in service quality.
 - Hampers the **overall sector growth**.
- **Universal STB has technical and commercial constraints** so the interoperability should be **platform-specific**.
Interoperable STBs within the cable TV segment and similarly within the DTH segment should be developed.
- The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** has been suggested to make the **required amendments in licensing and registration conditions to make interoperability mandatory**.
 - It has also been recommended to set up a **coordination committee to steer implementation of revised STB standards** for both the DTH and the cable TV segments.
 - The committee may **maintain continuous oversight for setting up of the digital TV standards** by **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

- It was established by an **Act of Parliament (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997)** to regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services.
- It provides a fair and transparent policy environment which promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition.
- The **TRAI Act was amended to establish a Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.

TDSAT was **set up to** adjudicate any dispute between a licensor and a licensee, between two or more service providers, between a service provider and a group of consumers, and to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction, decision or order of TRAI.

Source: TH