



TRAI Suspends New SMS Scrubbing Norms

Why in News

The [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](#) temporarily suspended the scrubbing of short message service or SMS by telecom service providers (TSP) for seven days.

- The action by TRAI comes after the functioning of several SMS-based services of banks and e-commerce platforms was affected recently, as the TSPs implemented the second phase of SMS regulation.

Key Points

- **Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation, 2018:**

- It was issued to **“effectively deal with the nuisance of spam”**.
- Rules mandate telcos to verify the content of every SMS with the registered text before delivering it to consumers.
 - As per TRAI norms, the content of all SMSes will now be verified before it is allowed to be delivered on the users’ device. This process, **known as scrubbing**, was implemented recently after several delays.
 - The new TRAI regulations for principal entities, which will be allowed to send SMSes to customers, seek registration of senders, telemarketers, headers, content, templates, consent templates and subscriber preference.
- The rules **prohibit unregistered senders** from initiating commercial messages, while registered companies are prevented from sending fraudulent messages to their customers.
- TRAI has released a framework under which telcos could use a distributed ledger technology or blockchain to **verify the sender information and content of every commercial SMS** before it was delivered on the user’s device.
 - **Blockchain** will ensure two things i.e, non-repudiation and confidentiality. Only those authorised to access details will be able to access subscriber details and only when they need to deliver service.
 - According to TRAI, the old technology and platform allowed unscrupulous telemarketers to override the stated preference of the subscriber by claiming consent that may have been surreptitiously obtained.

- **Recent Issue:**

- Even though TSPs implemented the scrubbing norms, some companies did not adopt them, leading to text messages getting dropped and transaction failures.
 - TSPs followed TRAI regulations and activated the due process of content scrubbing to address the issue of [unsolicited commercial communication](#).
 - TSPs had sent various communications to the principal entities to register their content template with TSPs.

Blockchain Technology

- Blockchain is a **shared, immutable ledger** that facilitates the process of recording transactions and tracking assets in a business network.
 - An asset can be tangible (a house, car, cash, land) or intangible (intellectual property, patents, copyrights, branding).
- Virtually anything of value can be tracked and traded on a blockchain network, reducing risk and cutting costs for all involved.
- The initial and primary use of blockchain technology was for monitoring **cryptocurrency** (e.g. bitcoin) transactions. However, other usage and applications have emerged in the last few years.
 - The government of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have put the **land records on the blockchain technology** owing to its easy traceability feature.
 - Election Commission (EC) officials are exploring the **potential of using blockchain technology to enable remote voting.**

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.

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