Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Repealing Regulations, 2023

For Prelims: [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India](#)**,** [OTT Communication service](#), Dial-up and Leased Line Internet Access.

For Mains: Developments in Telecom Sector in India, Issues Related to Telecom Sector in India.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the **[Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)](#)** took a significant step in modernizing the regulatory landscape by issuing the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Repealing Regulations, 2023.**

- This regulation aimed to repeal the outdated **Regulation on quality of service of dial-up and leased line internet access service, 2001**, which had been in effect since December 10, 2001.

What is Dial-up and Leased Line Internet Access?

- **Dial-up internet access** is a form of internet access that **uses the public switched telephone network (PSTN)** to establish a connection to an ISP via a telephone line.
    - It is the least expensive way to access the Internet, but it is also the slowest connection.
- **Leased line internet access** is a dedicated **point-to-point data circuit** that provides guaranteed bandwidth and symmetric upload and download speeds.
    - They are typically used by businesses or organizations that need **high-performance and reliable** [internet connectivity](#) for their operations.

How was Dial Up and Leased Line Internet Access Regulated, and Why is it Now Outdated?

- The Regulation on quality of service of dial-up and leased line internet access service, 2001, was initially **introduced to govern the quality of internet services provided by Basic Service Operators** and **[Internet Service Providers (ISPs)](#)** in India.
    - The regulation applied to all providers, including the incumbent operators such as **BSNL, MTNL, and VSNL.**
- When the regulations were introduced, **dial-up services were the predominant means of accessing low-speed internet.** However, over time, the [telecommunication networks](#) **have undergone significant transformations.**
    - The emergence of various technologies, including **FTTH, LTE, and 5G**, has made **high-**

speed broadband services widely available to consumers.

- Moreover, leased line access services are now predominantly offered by **Internet Gateway Service Providers (IGSPs) to enterprises,** and these services are governed by **Service Level Agreements (SLAs).**
    - SLAs inherently include provisions to safeguard concerns regarding service quality, **making the 2001 regulation less relevant in the current context.**
- With this regulatory burden lifted with Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Repealing Regulations, 2023, **service providers can focus more on delivering cutting-edge services** and improving customer experiences.
    - Additionally, the telecommunications sector may experience **increased competition and innovation, leading to enhanced service quality,** expanded coverage, and potential cost efficiencies.

What are the Current Major Challenges Related to Telecom Sector?

- **Financial Stress:** The telecom sector in India has been **grappling with intense competition**, low tariffs, and high debt burdens.
    - Several telecom companies were facing financial challenges, and some even **declared** bankruptcy **or merged with other players to stay afloat.**
- **Rural-Urban Disparity:** Although adequate tele-density has been achieved, there is a significant discrepancy in the share of telecom subscribers between **urban (55.42%) and rural (44.58%) areas of India.**
    - Also, fixed broadband penetration in the country is among the lowest in the world at **only 1.69 per 100 inhabitants.**
- **Issue with Over-the-Top Platforms (OTT):** OTT Communication service platforms like **WhatsApp and Telegram** use the network infrastructure of telecom service providers to provide services such as voice calls and SMS services.
    - **Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)** allege that these features result in a **double whammy for them** as they cut into their sources of revenue (voice calls, SMS).
- **Mismanagement of E-waste:** Telecom industry impacts the environment in multiple ways, including through the generation of e-waste. In India, **more than 95% of** e-waste **is illegally recycled by informal waste pickers.**

Way Forward

- **AI-Enabled Network Management:** Implement AI-**driven network management** systems that can **optimize network performance, predict maintenance needs,** and ensure seamless connectivity for users.
- **Telecom Infrastructure on Wheels:** Create **mobile telecom infrastructure units** that can be deployed to temporary or underserved locations, such as construction sites, festivals, or disaster areas, to provide reliable connectivity.
- **Streamlined Regulatory Processes:** Simplify and expedite regulatory approvals for telecom infrastructure deployment, reducing bureaucratic hurdles and promoting faster network expansion.
    - **Also, bringing OTT communication services under the ambient of regulation** is the need of hour.

What is Telecom Regulatory Authority of India?

- **About:**
    - The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** was established with effect from **20th February 1997** by **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.**
- **Composition:**
    - TRAI consists of a **chairperson and not more than two whole-time Members** and **not more than two part-time Members.**
- **Functions:**
    - To **regulate telecom services,** including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
    - Ensure quality of service and transparency in tariff

- Advise the government on policy matters and licensing issues
  - The recommendations of the TRAI are **not binding** upon the Central Government.
- **Appellate Authority:**
  - The TRAI Act was amended by an **ordinance, effective from 24 January 2000,** establishing a **Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following is/are the aims/aims of the "Digital India" Plan of the Government of India? (2018)

1. Formation of India's own Internet companies like China did.
2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centres within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centres.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)