

Information note to Press (Press Release no. 82/2023)

For Immediate Release

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

New Delhi, 13.09.2023: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India released Regulations on *Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulations, 2023 (03 of 2023)* dated 11th September 2023. Full text of the Regulations is available on TRAI's website at www.trai.gov.in.

2. Accuracy of Metering and Billing of telecom services has been a prime focus of the Regulator to protect the interest of consumers. In this regard, TRAI had notified the Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulation, 2006, on 21st March 2006. These regulations contain a Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy which is to be complied by all Basic Service Providers, Unified Access Service Providers and Cellular Mobile Telephone Service Providers. The amendment to the Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulation, 2006, was issued on 25th March 2013.

3. In the last ten years, the telecom networks and their technology have undergone significant changes, and many new services are being offered by the telecom service providers. Tariff offerings as well as the usage patterns of the services have also changed significantly.

4. Considering these changes, the Authority undertook a public consultation for review of the regulation. Under the consultation process, draft regulations, and guidelines on "*Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulations, 2023*" were released on the TRAI website on 24th February 2023 inviting comments from the stakeholders by 1st May 2023.

5. In response to the draft regulations and guidelines, the Authority received comments from eight stakeholders. Subsequently, an Open House Discussion (OHD), through virtual mode, was also held with the stakeholders on 7th July 2023. The Authority received additional comments from six stakeholders after the OHD. As deliberated during OHD, discussions were also held with the technical team of TSPs between 12th July 2023 to 18th July 2023 to clarify technical and operational aspects of different provisions of the regulations.

6. Based on the comments received from the stakeholders, discussions held during the OHD, subsequent discussion with team of the service providers, interactions with empaneled auditors and analysis thereof, *Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulations, 2023 (03 of 2023)* have been finalized and released by the Authority.

7. While finalizing the regulations, the Authority has ensured balance between two key objectives i.e. (i) to protect the interests of the subscribers by ensuring that service providers maintain fairness and transparency in their Metering and Billing System(s) (ii) to reduce compliance burden on the service provider to enhance Ease of Doing Business (EODB). Accordingly, the Authority has considered the emerging trends in the industry towards implementation of single centralized or few regional billing systems in the audit methodology prescribed.

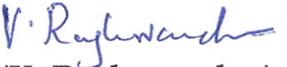
8. Under the new regulations, each LSA shall be audited only once in a financial year unlike four times as per old regulations, thereby reducing the audit burden by almost 75%. However, while simplifying the audit process, it is also ensured to cover maximum tariff offerings under audit unlike in previous regulation which has the provision for audit of fifteen most popular tariff offerings only leaving aside good number of tariffs offering with less number of subscriptions. The new regulation shall now cover critical tariff offerings like related to international roaming, even with low subscriber base. Further, the new regulations put an emphasis on refund of maximum amount in a definite time frame, which have been overcharged from consumers. To discourage overcharging provisions have been made to introduce upfront Financial Disincentive (FD) as percentage of total overcharged amount from all similarly placed consumers, if detected during the audit.

9. For smooth compliance of regulatory provisions and to facilitate Ease of Doing Business , the Authority has also accepted some of major requests of the service providers which include (i) deletion of provision related to self-evaluation by service providers before start of audit by the auditor (ii) giving flexibility to service provider in selection of LSAs to be audited in each quarter (iii) enhancing the time limit to 30 days for providing the raw CDRs to the auditor from 15 days proposed in the draft regulations (iv) introduction of graded financial disincentives (FD) instead of flat rate-based FD and (v) modification in retention period for audit records etc., and required changes

have been incorporated in the regulations.

10. By releasing new regulations, *Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulations, 2023 (03 of 2023)* earlier regulations namely *Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulation, 2006*, and its amendments issued on 25th March 2013 stand repealed.

11. For any clarification, Shri Tejpal Singh, Advisor (QoS-I), TRAI, may be contacted on email: adv-qos1@traai.gov.in or at Tel. No: +91-11-2323-3602.


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