

Broadband India Forum Supports ICRIER Working Paper's Findings Against Satellite Spectrum Auctions

Highlights Failure to Meet Key Spectrum Management Objectives

New Delhi, 10th August 2023: The Broadband India Forum (BIF), an independent policy forum and knowledge-based think-tank, today highlighted the compelling findings of the recently released ICRIER Working Paper (No.417 of July 2023). The paper, authored by ICRIER and Prof Rekha Jain, scrutinizes the implications of Satellite Spectrum Assignments through auctions and underscores the failure of auctions in achieving vital spectrum management and regulatory objectives.

The authors conducted a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the auction mechanism for spectrum assignment in achieving policy goals and regulations. The assessment was based on nine specific criteria, including effective utilization by service providers, promoting competition, ensuring a fair and transparent allocation process, harmonizing with international best practices, maximizing productive spectrum use, achieving universal coverage, enhancing diversity in the TV industry, fostering satellite sector growth, and enabling global competitiveness for Indian telecom companies.

The conclusion of the comprehensive analysis is a resounding indictment of exclusive assignments and auctions as mechanisms that fall short of fulfilling the critical objectives of spectrum management and regulation. Importantly, the authors emphasize that satellite spectrum is a shared resource, and existing empirical and practical models of assignment through auctions are scant. Instead, the authors advocate for an administrative assignment of space-based communication spectrum on a shared basis, in line with international best practices.

The paper suggests that employing prioritization and coordination mechanisms for spectrum sharing within the framework of ITU Radio Regulations, adapted to the domestic context, would offer regulatory certainty. This approach would be instrumental in achieving universal coverage, facilitating satellite sector growth, enhancing the global competitiveness of Indian telecom companies, and most crucially, preserving and enhancing content diversity and plurality – the foundation of a robust democracy.

Mr. T.V. Ramachandran, President of BIF, the think tank that commissioned the research report, commented, "As highlighted by the experts, the auctioning of satellite spectrum could result in an overly challenging scenario for industry participants, making it exceedingly difficult to access the spectrum or manage the burden of high auction prices.

Such an outcome would significantly compromise consumer interests and the overall well-being of the sector. Notably, it is imperative to recognize that the unanimous sentiment among our space startups, satellite/broadcast operators, and service providers stands firmly against the notion of satellite spectrum auctions."

About Broadband India Forum: *Broadband India Forum (BIF) is an independent policy forum and knowledge-based think-tank that works for the development and enhancement of the entire broadband ecosystem in a holistic, technology-neutral and service-neutral manner. BIF has established itself as a thought leader and a credible and effective voice, to help propel the nation to achieve the country's ambitious vision of creating a Digital India. To achieve this, BIF works to promote the rapid development of policies, so as to facilitate affordable and high-speed ubiquitous broadband throughout the country.*