

PRESS RELEASE

BIF Urges TRAI to Correct 'Fundamental Structural Defect' in Satellite Network Authorisation Framework

Says satellite communications are distinct services under the Telecommunications Act— and not networks

New Delhi, 9 July 2026: The Broadband India Forum (BIF), in its Final Written Submission following the Open House Discussion on TRAI's Consultation Paper on the Satellite Communication Network (SCN) Authorisation framework, has highlighted that any framework for Satellite Network will not be consistent with the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 (the Act) which recognizes 'Satellite based Services'. A copy of the submission is also attached.

In its submission, BIF has reasoned that Parliament, through the First Schedule of the Act, expressly recognises satellite-based services such as GMPCS, VSAT, Teleports, DTH and Mobile Satellite Services as distinct service categories eligible for administrative spectrum assignment. BIF has submitted that TRAI itself has twice recommended satellite communications as services.

BIF submitted that, therefore, satellite communication is a telecommunication service, it must be considered so in the corresponding Rules under Section 3(1)(a) of the Act, and must be treated so in regulatory consultations and not treated as a network. BIF submitted that in this respect the recently notified Principal Telecommunication Services Authorisation Rules, 2026 are inconsistent with the Act.

The absence of a dedicated satellite service authorisation creates a significant structural gap in the current framework by leaving uncertainty regarding the natural assignee of administratively assigned satellite spectrum under Entry 16 of the First Schedule and could lead to future legal disputes. It cautioned that introducing spectrum assignment through a network authorisation could place the regulatory framework on an uncertain footing and create avoidable ambiguity regarding spectrum eligibility, accountability and compliance.

The two-layer SCN model by DoT would require satellite operators to depend upon authorised terrestrial service providers for delivering services to end users, which will have inherent complexities and can be easily avoided by having satellite communication as services.

BIF emphasised that such a framework should ultimately be evaluated against its impact on consumers. It submitted that layering wholesale and retail regulatory structures is likely to increase operational costs and complexity, with the resulting burden ultimately being passed on to consumers through higher prices and slower expansion of satellite services, besides creating uncertainty in the sector.

Mr. T.V. Ramachandran, President, Broadband India Forum, said:

“BIF fully supports greater investment, stronger competition and accelerated growth of India’s satellite communications sector. Our submission is about ensuring that the regulatory architecture adopted should achieve a legally sound, technologically appropriate and most importantly, provide certainty to investors. A standalone Satellite-based Telecommunication Service Authorisation is essential for this and would also be consistent with the legislative intent, indicated in the Telecommunications Act, the Indian Space Policy and the NFAP issued by DoT itself. ”

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 & broadcasting 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, to facilitate affordable and high-speed ubiquitous broadband throughout the country.*