

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

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TRAI Releases Consultation Paper on Mobile Phone Theft

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India today issued a Consultation Paper on Mobile Phone Theft, with a view to seeking opinions and suggestions on the best way of dealing with this issue.

Mobile phone theft and its re-use is becoming a major problem in all countries. This also has a serious security dimension. In India too, despite rapid growth of the mobile telephony market, there is still a wide gap in the costs of handsets in the grey market and the legitimate market. The problem of theft of handsets in cities, specially metros is becoming a concern. TRAI has been considering for sometime the need to evolve a regime to disincentivise theft of handsets through legislation and other policies.

Recently, some steps have been taken in the United Kingdom to address the matter of mobile phone theft, through legislative change and efforts to collaborate on database development and data sharing. A number of other countries in Europe are also considering similar steps.

Given the importance of the matter of mobile phone theft for consumers and security concerns, the Authority has released a consultation paper which summarises some relevant aspects of the problem, lists out certain findings and the current position of different countries on this problem, and takes up a solution considered by United Kingdom and other European countries as a starting point. The paper notes a wide range of actions required to curb theft of mobile handsets which involve data collection, dissemination and use, legislative actions, public awareness programmes, and collaboration among various entities, both within the country and outside, which include operators, manufacturers of handsets, the police and other Government Departments.

The paper notes that a comprehensive solution would require major effort and time, and it would be necessary to identify certain initial steps which would begin the process of addressing the theft of mobile handsets, and would yield significant results. These steps are suggested as blocking of handsets and collaborative efforts among operators and manufacturers of handsets in this regard. It is thus suggested we could begin with the development of Equipment Identity Register (EIR) database, with a centralized EIR together with procedures of exchanging information and for blocking of handsets that are reported to be stolen.

Comments are invited on a number of issues, including the role of the Regulator in this matter, how to address the problem of duplicate Identification Number for the handsets, procedures required for collection/updation of data and

interaction amongst the relevant entities, ownership and cost implication of setting up of the Central Equipment Identity Register, and the need for legislative changes.

For more detail, please see the TRAI website at "[www. trai.gov.in](http://www.trai.gov.in)".

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