

**Information Note to the Press (Press Release No.12/2018)**

For immediate release

**TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA**

**TRAI releases Recommendations on “Issues related to Digital Radio Broadcasting in India”**

**New Delhi, 1st February 2018-** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today released its recommendations on “Issues related to Digital Radio Broadcasting in India”.

2. At present, analog terrestrial radio broadcast in India is carried out in Medium Wave (MW), Short Wave (SW), and VHF-II (FM band) spectrum bands. AIR - the public service broadcaster - has established 467 radio stations encompassing 662 radio transmitters, which include 140 MW, 48 SW, and 474 FM transmitters. Private sector radio broadcasters are licensed to transmit programs in FM frequency band (88-108 MHz) only and presently operate through 322 radio stations in 86 cities.

3. Presently radio signals are largely transmitted in analog mode in the country. Analog terrestrial radio broadcasting, when compared with digital mode, is inefficient and suffers from operational restrictions. With the advancement in technologies, digital radio technologies around the globe have been developed and adopted by a number of countries in order to offer more choice to listeners along with efficient use of spectrum. Digital Radio broadcasting provides a number of advantages over analog radio broadcasting. The biggest advantage of digital radio is that it is possible to broadcast three to four channels on a single frequency carrier while ensuring excellent quality of audio for all the channels whereas analog mode broadcasts only one channel



on a frequency carrier. In a competitive environment, digital radio broadcasting can provide exciting new opportunities to radio broadcasters as well as a host of value-added-services to the listeners.

4. In order to develop an eco-system, which can facilitate deployment of digital radio broadcasting, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had *suo-motu* issued a consultation paper on “Issues related to Digital Radio Broadcasting in India” on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Written comments and counter comments on the consultation paper were invited from the stakeholders by 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 and 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2017. All the comments received were posted on TRAI’s website. Subsequently, an Open House Discussion was also held in New Delhi on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The Authority after carefully examining various issues emanating from the written submissions of the stakeholders, Open House Discussions, International practices and its own analysis has arrived at its recommendations.

5. The Authority expects that the recommendations would enable a smooth transition from analog to digital radio broadcasting services, without disruption of the existing FM Radio services.

7. The salient features of the recommendations are:

- (i) Government should notify the policy framework for digital radio broadcasting in India in time bound manner with clear roadmap for rollout of digital radio broadcasting services.
- (ii) The WPC wing of DoT should carry out necessary amendments in NFAP-2011 for permitting Digital Radio Broadcasting in MW, SW, and VHF-II frequency bands
- (iii) Private sector should be permitted to provide digital radio broadcasting services within the existing frequency band of 88 –108 MHz used for FM radio broadcasting.
- (iv) Frequency and geographical area coverage planning for digital radio broadcasting using the vacant 600 KHz spectrum in VHF-II (88 –108





MHz) and VHF-III (174-230 MHz) bands should be completed by BECIL, AIR, and WPC together in phased manner.

- (v) 200 KHz bandwidth spectrum in VHF-II band should be auctioned for providing digital Radio broadcasting services. Auction should be carried out in phases – starting with cities of category ‘A+’ and ‘A’ and subsequently in cities of other categories.
- (vi) Immediately after the successful auction of spectrum for digital radio broadcasting, an offer should be made to the existing FM Radio broadcasters to get their existing frequency bandwidth of  $\pm$  100 KHz, already allocated through auction in Phase-III of FM Radio, liberalized and provide digital radio broadcasting services in simulcast mode with analog FM Radio services.
- (vii) For liberalizing of existing spectrum, already allocated to the FM radio broadcasters in Phase-III of FM Radio, they will have to pay an amount equal to the difference of auction determined price of equivalent spectrum for digital radio broadcasting in a city and amount paid for allocation of FM radio frequency.
- (viii) In case market determined price of 200 KHz for digital radio broadcasting is less than or equal to the price paid by FM radio broadcasters then FM radio broadcasters will not be required to pay any additional amount and he will be permitted to provide digital radio broadcasting services also for the remaining period of permission.
- (ix) The broadcasters should be allowed to make use of any available digital technology, recognized by ITU, within the allocated/liberalized spectrum for providing digital radio broadcasting services subject to adaptation, if any, recommended by MIB/TRAI from time to time.
- (x) No date for digital switch over of radio broadcasting services should be declared at this stage.
- (xi) Existing analog FM Radio channels should be allowed to remain operational for the remaining period of their Phase-III permissions.



