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TRAI releases Quality of Service Regulations for Direct to Home (DTH) Service

New Delhi, 31st August, 2007- TRAI has issued today the Direct to Home Broadcasting Services (Standards of Quality of Service and Redressal of Grievances) Regulation, 2007, which essentially covers regulatory provisions relating to protection of the interests of DTH subscribers.

1. The DTH guidelines and licensing conditions were issued by the Govt. of India in 2001. Doordarshan has been offering free-to-air DTH services to its customers for some time. Subsequently, two DTH operators offering pay DTH services have also rolled out their operations. However, it is only in the last one year that these two pay DTH operators could offer popular TV channels and content and thus gain acceptance among the consumers. There are around 3.2 million pay DTH subscribers. Four more pay DTH operators are either in the process of rolling out their services, or in the process of getting DTH licenses. However, it is seen that DTH operations are as yet at a nascent stage, as compared to about 70 million cable TV subscribers.

2. A need was felt by TRAI to initiate a consultation process on the quality of service (**QoS**) issues so that the interests of DTH subscribers could be protected, and also to ensure that the new DTH operators geared up their operations accordingly from the very beginning. We already have such QoS regulations for CAS cable services and for telecom services. Accordingly, a Consultation Paper covering QoS and interconnection issues for DTH was circulated on 2nd March, 2007. After receiving comments from

stakeholders, an open house discussion was held at Bhubaneshwar on 18th May, 2007. Based on the input received during the consultation process including the open house discussion, TRAI has issued the Direct to Home Broadcasting Services (Standards of Quality of Service and Redressal of Grievances) Regulation, 2007.

3. The salient features of the DTH QoS Regulations are as follows:

- (i) The order will take effect from 1.12.2007.
- (ii) The DTH operator will formulate schemes to offer customer premises equipments (including the set top box) to its subscribers on outright purchase basis, hire-purchase basis and rental basis. Authority may also prescribe suitable schemes in this regard in future if necessary.
- (iii) The DTH operator, while formulating its scheme for hire-purchase, will make provision for refund to be given to subscribers if they choose to return the customer premises equipment. This facility, together with rental scheme, is expected to provide commercial interoperability to DTH subscribers in addition to technical interoperability which is already there in DTH licensing conditions.
- (iv) The DTH operator will devise the format for application form, and will assign a customer identification number to each such application received.
- (v) A time limit of 5 working days has been prescribed for complying with requests relating to shifting, disconnection and reconnection.
- (vi) DTH operator will give notice for discontinuing a channel or for disconnecting a subscriber.
- (vii) DTH operator will not disable the set top box (**STB**) if the subscriber has opted out of his service. This will enable the DTH subscriber to use the STB for receiving other DTH services.
- (viii) The subscription package offered to a subscriber will not be changed for 6 months. However, the subscriber can opt out of a particular package for any other package at any time.
- (ix) Post paid subscribers, if any, will be issued bills containing details such as charges for subscription package, value added services, customer premises equipments, taxes etc.

- (x) DTH operator will establish call centres with sufficient number of telephone lines with “toll free” numbers, such that the benchmarks relating to response time are met (e.g., 80% calls to be answered within 60 seconds in case of voice operators and within 20 seconds if answered electronically, etc.).
- (xi) Each request or complaint to a call centre to be assigned a docket number.
- (xii) 90% of complaints regarding non-receipt of signals to be redressed within 24 hrs., and 90% of other type of complaints to be redressed within 48 hrs. No complaint to remain pending beyond 5 days. All billing complaints to be redressed within 7 days.
- (xiii) DTH operators will nominate Nodal Officers for redressal of grievances of those subscribers who are not satisfied with the redressal at call centre level.
- (xiv) The Nodal Officer will redress the grievances within 10 days of registering of the complaint.
- (xv) Complaints received by TRAI and forwarded to DTH operator will be redressed within 15 days of forwarding, and outcome intimated both to the subscriber as well as to TRAI.
- (xvi) DTH operator will prepare a manual containing details such as benchmarks for grievance redressal, call centres, Nodal Officers, operating instructions for STB, etc. A copy of the same to be supplied to each subscriber.

4. It is expected that these regulations will effectively protect the interests of the DTH subscribers without hampering the growth of DTH operations in the country. The full text of the Regulation is available on TRAI's website www.trai.gov.in.

Authorised to issue: Principal Adviser (B&CS).