TRAI Chairman believes that the interconnection controversy can be resolved through a discussion with CEOs

NEW DELHI, September 27, 2016: TRAI Chairman, **Mr R S Sharma** speaking at an industry interaction at FICCI, earlier today, said that the controversy regarding the interconnection issues between the telecom operators, can be resolved through an across-the-table discussion with the CEOs. He said that a meeting of the CEOs is being called soon, with a view to finding a resolution to the problem that has dominated the sector for the last two months. The interactive session was moderated by Mr. Virat Bhatia, Chairman, FICCI ICT and Digital Economy Committee.

When asked as to why the industry finds itself in this position, and whether it was due to lack of proper regulation or licensing issues, etc., he said that he did not want to elaborate, given the sensitivity of the matter, but that the regulations do not leave scope for ambiguity.

Chairman, TRAI, spoke on a range of issues, including the 20 consultation papers, in various stages, released in the last 18 months. These, according to Mr. R S Sharma, are necessary for removing ambiguity in the telecom sector and allowing the stakeholders to function in harmony. TRAI felt the need for consultation papers in order to bring about a comprehensive regulatory framework which will plug the gaps in the system and facilitate the industry to grow seamlessly.

He told members of the FICCI ICT and Digital Economy Committee that, with the advent of technology such as cloud computing and internet of things (IOT), ICT is transforming every sector and telecom should also leverage it. Earlier, technology was on the periphery but in the last decade with disruptive technologies coming in, it has become a central tool. He added that ICT also brings with it efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Speaking on competition issues in general, in the telecom sector, Mr. Sharma said that TRAI promotes healthy competition. He added that the idea is to encourage heathy competition and ensure that interest of the consumers is safeguarded. He added that for TRAI, the consumers' interest is paramount and they must not suffer on any account.

Mr. Sharma said that India already has a world class network and with new technology coming in the service should also become world class. India should strive for next generation network by employing new technologies such as Loons, Solar Planes, and White Spaces. He said that there was a need to harmonize the issues of business interest with disruptive technologies. To achieve this, it was necessary to put down licensing rules, norms and quality aspects through regulation.

Mr. Sharma said that TRAI was one of the regulatory bodies that engaged in a consultative process with industry before coming out with any policy or guidelines. Industry has an opportunity to share its concerns with TRAI to work out a feasible and sustainable framework.

Responding to the queries raised by industry regarding restriction in experimentation and use of new technologies, Mr. Sharma said that TRAI and he were in favor of trying out new technologies with appropriate permissions. However, he added that these technologies should be interoperable with open APIs and should not be in silos.

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