

Alliance of Consumers' Associations of India reiterates implementation of BAK from Jan 1, 2020

Consumer associations vehemently oppose any decision of government to defer scrapping of IUC beyond Dec 31, 2019, as it will hurt consumer interests.

New Delhi: ACAI (Alliance of Consumers' Associations of India), the grand alliance of major national level consumer rights and awareness organisations have opposed in one voice any plans of TRAI or government to defer the implementation of BAK regime of settling interconnection between operators for offnet voice traffic.

Reiterating its position on the issue at the recently held OHD (Open House Discussion) of TRAI on IUC held on November 15th in Delhi, representatives of member organisations of the alliance jointly participated in the discussion to express deep concern over any kind of extension to the deadline of implementing BAK method.

The alliance has put forth its recommendations report regarding the matter. The key recommendations regarding IUC matter are: -

- Innovation and new technology cannot be perpetually delayed without any reason depriving consumers benefit from the latest applications and services. Operators who are investing and bringing innovations in the services should not be made inefficient.
- Any kind of modification to the existing deadline regarding implementation of BAK regime will weaken the trust and commitment that exists between the consumers and the government.
- There has to be a predictive policy regime which includes adherence to the implementation programme. The unnecessary and undue modification in the schedule takes the very essence of any policy.
- BAK is a step towards bringing efficiency in the telecom system that will benefit consumers. A healthy and collaborative competition is in the interests of the consumers.
- Consumers overwhelmingly accept new services and technologies and the data analysis suggests consumers have always willingly paid more to avail new technologies and services.
- IUC regime serves the interests of operators who have not kept with the pace of innovation and invested adequately serving the interests of the consumers. Rather than incentivising, there should be a penalising method forcing operators to keep with the global trends giving the citizens of India, services at par with the global standards.

ACAI was formed at the roundtable discussion on IUC organized by TUG India on November 8th, 2019, which was attended by all main consumer interest groups. These included: -

- Telecom Users Group India.
- The Aware Consumer.
- VOICE.
- Dignity Restoration & Grievance Settlement Association.
- Citizen Awareness Group.

The alliance has resolved to take up the consumer issues in digital services and focus on the four key areas of: -

- Service Experience.
- Service Quality.
- Service Security & Privacy.
- Service Pricing.

ACAI decided to raise the consumer interest issues with the regulator and the government for ensuring 'Consumer First' approach in the digital services where consumers are facing a lot of troubles due to lack of empathy shown by the key enablers including the regulator, government and the operators.

The alliance shall be raising issues of consumer interest in the digital domain and fight till the logical conclusion as well as resolution of the challenges and issues faced by consumers – enterprise as well as individual. The first issue taken up by ACAI is regarding IUC, where it supports the implementation of BAK regime from scheduled January 1st, 2020.

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