

Subject: Counter-comments on the Draft Telecom Consumers Protection (Thirteenth Amendment) Regulations, 2026.

1. Digital Inclusion Should Be a Choice, Not Forced

TSPs say data packs are needed for Digital India and to encourage digital usage.

Our view:

People should not be forced to pay for mobile data they do not use. Low-income users should have affordable voice-and-SMS-only plans. Mandatory data bundles unfairly increase the cost of basic communication and burden those who only need essential services. Affordable connectivity is essential for social inclusion, education, work, healthcare, and emergency communication. Telecom providers should therefore offer flexible plans that respect and consumers should be free to choose plans based on their actual needs.

2. Spam and Security Should Be Managed by TSPs

TSPs say cheaper packs may increase spam.

Our view:

Telecom companies should address spam using better technology, stricter enforcement, and smarter regulation. Penalizing genuine users by eliminating affordable plans is not the right solution.

3. Price Should Reduce if Data is Removed

TSPs say costs are fixed, so prices cannot change much.

Our view:

Our view is that this is not justified. Data services constitute a major part of the overall package, and if the data component is removed, the pricing should be reduced proportionately. Consumers should not be charged nearly the same amount for voice-only plans when a significant portion of the service offering has been excluded. Charging high prices for voice-only plans is unfair and does not reflect the actual value being provided to customers. Tariff structures should be transparent, reasonable, and aligned with the services

4. Equal Validity Options for Everyone

TSPs say current long-validity plans are enough.

Our view:

Telecom Service Providers provide several validity options for data users — 28, 56, and 84 days — but voice-only users are denied the same choice. This is unfair, especially for low-income customers and senior citizens who mainly need calling services. Voice-only plans should also offer equal validity options at affordable prices.

5. Data Should Not Be Forced in the Name of Safety

TSPs say data helps in emergencies.

Our view:

Some people still use simple mobile phones that don't support advanced features. For smartphone users, telecom companies could offer an option to completely restrict or control mobile data usage instead of requiring users to buy fixed data packages. The idea is that safety or protection claims should not be used as a justification to make services more expensive.

6. Information Should Reach All Consumers

TSPs say information is available on websites and apps.

Our view:

Many people do not use apps or websites. These plans should also be clearly shown at shops and informed through SMS in local languages so that everyone is aware.

A lot of people are not familiar with or do not use digital platforms like apps and websites. So, it is important that information about plans is also shared in simple, visible ways in shops also at strategic locations and sent via text messages in local languages, ensuring that all people—regardless of digital access or language—can understand them.