

TELECOM CONSUMERS PROTECTION (THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2026

This draft regulation is an important step towards protecting the rights and welfare of Telecom consumers. In particular, the proposal by TRAI to ensure the availability of Voice and SMS-only Special Tariff Vouchers (STVs) for consumers who do not use data services – especially elderly persons, low-income users, rural consumers and feature phone users – is highly commendable.

Our comments are as follows:

- 1. The requirement to provide Voice & SMS-only packs for all validity periods is highly essential. At present, telecom service providers are offering only a few packs with longer validity periods, which creates difficulties for poor and rural consumers who require short-term recharge options. Therefore, validity options such as 14 days, 28 days, 56 days, and 84 days should also be made mandatory.**
- 2. The phrase “largely proportional reduction” in the pricing of Voice & SMS-only packs requires clear regulatory guidelines. Otherwise, telecom operators may continue to charge higher prices even after removing data services. Hence, TRAI should issue a transparent pricing framework for such packs.**
- 3. Voice & SMS-only plans should be clearly published and prominently displayed at all points of sale, websites, mobile applications, and customer service centres. Many consumers are unaware that such plans exist. Therefore, telecom operators must be mandated to prominently display these packs.**
- 4. For rural consumers and digitally less-literate users, facilities should be provided through USSD, IVR, and SMS platforms to easily identify and recharge Voice-only plans.**
- 5. TRAI should periodically monitor whether telecom operators are properly implementing these regulations. A mechanism for penalties and consumer compensation should also be introduced for non-compliance.**
- 6. This amendment will reduce the compulsion on consumers to purchase unnecessary data bundles and help control their expenditure. It is a positive step towards strengthening consumer choice, fairness, and equality in telecom services.**

In conclusion, this Draft Amendment is a significant initiative aimed at protecting consumer interests. However, if stronger measures are introduced regarding pricing transparency, easy accessibility, short-duration packs, and regulatory monitoring, the

regulation will more effectively benefit all categories of telecom consumers in the true spirit of consumer welfare.

**Thanking You,
Yours Sincerely,**

(John K Thirunavukkarasu)